



# Chapter 10: Stress in Simple Words

Course Name: English  
Phonology  
Instructor: Firas F. Ali

# In this chapter...

- What is the difference between simple words and complex words?
- What is stress?
- What are the levels of stress?
- Stress placement

- Simple words are words with no affixes (prefixes or suffixes) such as the word 'happy'.
- Complex words are words with affixes. The word 'happiness' is complex because it has a suffix.

- Stress (Prominence) needs to be discussed from two points of view: the speaker, and the listener.
- When we talk about the speaker, then we are talking about production. When we talk about the listener, then we are talking about perception.

- In order to produce stressed syllables, the speaker needs more muscular energy than in producing unstressed syllables.
- Prominence on the part of the listener (perception) depends on four main factors: length, loudness, pitch, and quality.

- Length: stressed syllables are longer than unstressed syllables.
- Loudness: stressed syllables are louder than unstressed syllables.
- Pitch: stressed syllables have a different pitch than unstressed syllables.
- Quality: stressed syllables have a different quality.

- Length and pitch are more important in determining prominence than loudness and quality.
- Syllables differ in length, loudness, pitch, and quality because of the vowel.

- Stress has two levels: stressed and unstressed.
- Stressed means the presence of stress.
- Unstressed means the absence of stress.
- The stressed level is sub-divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary stress.



- Primary stress is the strongest level of stress. Tertiary stress is the weakest.
- Primary stress is represented by placing a small vertical line above the syllable.
- Secondary stress is represented by placing a small vertical line below the syllable.

- Stress placement depends on four factors: the morphological structure of the word, the grammatical category of the word, the number of syllables, and the phonological structure of the word.

- Stress Placement in Two-syllable Words:

- Verbs:

In verbs, we start from the second syllable. If the second syllable is weak, stress is placed on the first such as 'open' 'əʊpən. If the second syllable is strong, stress is placed on it even if the first is also strong such as 'maintain' meɪn'teɪn. If the second syllable of the verb has the diphthong /əʊ/, it is weak such as 'follow' 'fɒləʊ.

- Stress Placement in Two-syllable Words:

- Adjectives:

Adjectives follow the same rules of stress placement of verbs, except the two words 'honest' and 'perfect' where primary stress is placed on the first syllable.

- Stress Placement in Two-syllable Words:

- Nouns:

Nouns require a different rule. In nouns, we start from the first syllable. If the first is strong, stress is placed on it. If the first is weak, stress is placed on the second.

Examples: In the word 'money', primary stress is placed on the first syllable. In the word 'balloon', stress is placed on the second syllable.

- Stress Placement in Three-syllable Words:

- Verbs:

In verbs, we start from the third syllable. If the third syllable is strong, stress is placed on it such as 'entertain'. If the third syllable is weak, stress is placed on the second (penultimate syllable) such as 'encounter'. If the third and second syllables of the verb are both weak, stress is placed on the first such as 'monitor'.

- Stress Placement in Three-syllable Words:

- Nouns:

Nouns require a different rule. In nouns, we start from the first syllable. If the first is strong, stress is placed on it. If the first is weak, stress is placed on the second.

Examples: In the word 'quantity', primary stress is placed on the first syllable. In the word 'potato', stress is placed on the second syllable.

- Stress Placement in Three-syllable Words:

- Adjectives:

Adjectives follow the same rules of stress placement of nouns.