

# Word and Sentence Stress

*Ronaldo Lima Jr*

*<http://phonphon.pbworks.com>*

## Word Stress

- Any syllable can be stressed:  
**TECH**nical      ba**N**Ana      under**STAND**
- A stressed syllable:
  - is longer
  - has higher pitch
  - is louder
- The most common vowel in English is [ə] because, in connected speech, all unstressed vowels can be reduced to schwa

## SOME RULES:

1. **Core vocabulary:** many everyday two-syllable nouns and adjectives are stressed on the first syllable. **MO**ther, **WA**ter, **PA**per, **TA**ble, **CO**Ffee, **LO**vely, etc.
2. **Prefixes and Sufixes:** usually unstressed. **QUI**etly, o**RIG**inally, de**FEC**tive, etc.

3. **Compound Words:** Stress usually on the first word. **NEWS**paper, **TEA**pot, **CROSS**word, etc. Notice:  
**GREEN**house - the effect  
green **HOUSE** - a house that is green  
**HARD** drive - computer memory  
hard **DRIVE** - a difficult drive  
(a) white **HOUSE**  
(the) **WHITE** house  
I **SCREAM**  
**ICE**cream



4. **Words with dual roles:** Tendency: noun on the first syllable, verb on the last one. *IM*port(n.), *im***PORT**(v.), *RE*bel(n.), *re***BEL**(v.), *IN*crease (n.), *in***CREASE**(v.), etc.
5. **Stress-attractors endings:** -ade, -ain, -ee(r), -esque, -esce, -ess, -ette, -ique, -oo(n), -ese, -self(v). pa**RADE**, ab**STAIN**, interview**EE**, engi**NEER**, gro**TESQUE**, conva**LESCE**, as**SESS**, statu**ETTE**, cri**TIQUE**, kanga**ROO**, japa**NESE**, her**SELF**, etc.

## Word Stress and IPA

Diacritics: ' for primary stress  
and , for secondary stress:

‘opportunity’ / ,ɑ:pər'tju:nɪti/

‘telephone’ / 'telə,fəʊn/

‘substitute’ / 'sʌbstɪ'tu:t/

‘misinterpretation’  
/ ,mɪsɪntɜ:rprə'teɪʃən/

‘contextualize’ / kən'tekstʃuə,laɪz/

## Sentence Stress

- English is stress-timed or isochronous (as opposed to syllable-timed)
- Sentence Stress determines rhythm

They **LIVE** in an **OLD HOUSE**.

They **LIVE** in a **NICE OLD HOUSE**.

They've been **LIV**ing in a de**LIGHT**ful **OLD HOUSE**.

They've been **LIV**ing in a de**LIGHT**ful **OLD COTT**age.

They've been **LIV**ing in a de**LIGHT**ful vic**TOR**ian **COTT**age.



# Sentence Stress

- Full Forms vs. Weak Forms
  - function words (prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, articles, auxiliary verbs)

WORD	FULL FORM	WEAK FORM
do	/dʊ:/ 'I do like you.'	/də/ 'Where do you live?'
them	/ðem/ 'I was talking to them, not to you.'	/əm/ 'Go ahead, tell them what you told me.'
to	/tu:/ 'I'll take you to the airport, but not back home.'	/tə/ 'C'mon, we really need to go.'



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