



# Word Emphasis

## vs. Word Stress

Statistics vary, but research says that it's roughly 80-90 % HOW you say your words... rather than the words you say, that carries the meaning.

Pronouncing words with the proper emphasis on the correct syllable is often called “*word stress*”. That means you simply say a certain part of a word (one syllable) with more emphasis, stress or volume. If you emphasize the wrong part of a word (wrong syllable), it can:

- 1.) Hinder how people understand your spoken words, and,
- 2.) Make your foreign accent more prevalent; more obvious.

These exercises really demonstrate the importance of what inflections you choose to put on your words and how you can manipulate the meaning of your words with the use of different vocal tones and volume. Usually, your face will adopt different expressions too.

There are many words in the English language which have a basic meaning and there are variations on that same word, depending on the application of your meaning.

“Smoking is detrimental to his health.”

“Her quick temper works in detriment to her popularity.”

WORD	. x CORRECT EMPHASIS	# of SYLLABLES	PHONETIC pronunciation
Eyelash	<u>EYE</u> -lash	2	<u>AAEE</u> -lash

**Mouth Warm-Ups:**

BUZZ: Teeth to Lip  
 BUBBLE: Lip to Lip  
 Hold “OOH” shape

Katherine is constantly adding words, so this exercise is always “in progress”.

Here are some common words which are often said with improperly placed vocal volume stress:



WORD	. x CORRECT EMPHASIS	# of SYLLABLES	PHONETIC pronunciation
eyelash	<b>EYE</b> -lash	2	<b>AAEE</b> -lash
lament	la- <b>MENT</b>	2	lah- <b>MENT</b>
allowed	all <b>OW</b> ed	2	ah- <b>LOWD</b>
contest (verb)	con- <b>TEST</b> EG-“Sandra chose to CONTEST her father’s will because it was unfair.”	2	kon- <b>TESST</b>
contest (noun)	<b>CON</b> -test EG-“He was looking forward to the picnic race as a friendly CONTEST.”	2	<b>KON</b> -test
context	<b>CON</b> -text	2	<b>KON</b> -tekst
tofu	<b>TO</b> fu	2	<b>TOH</b> -foo
return	re <b>TURN</b>	2	re- <b>TERN</b>
ourselves	our <b>SELVES</b>	2	awer- <b>SELVZ</b>
yourself	your <b>SELF</b>	2	yore- <b>SELLF</b>
commit	com <b>MIT</b>	2	kuh- <b>MIT</b>
vowel	<b>VOW</b> el	2	<b>VOW</b> -il
cashew	<b>CA</b> shew	2	<b>KA</b> -shoo
preview	<b>PRE</b> view	2	<b>PREE</b> -vyoo
orange	<b>O</b> range	2	<b>O</b> -ranj
table	<b>TA</b> ble	2	<b>TAY</b> -bul
jewel	<b>JEW</b> el	2	<b>JOO</b> -wil
rescue	<b>RES</b> cue	2	<b>RESS</b> -kyoo
legend	<b>LE</b> gend	2	<b>LEH</b> -jind
alright	(often equal)	2	allryte
received	re- <b>CEIVED</b>	2	ree- <b>SEEV’D</b>
errands	<b>ERR</b> ands	2	<b>ERR</b> -endz
research	<b>RE</b> search	2	<b>REE</b> -surch

mistake	mis <b>T</b> AKE	2	miss- <b>TAY</b> KE
sentence	<b>S</b> ENtence	2	<b>SEN</b> -tense
program	<b>P</b> ROgram	2	<b>PRO</b> -gramm
major	<b>M</b> Ajor	2	<b>MAY</b> -jur
menu	<b>M</b> ENu	2	<b>MENN</b> -yoo
birthday	<b>B</b> IRThday	2	<b>BUR</b> Th-day
lamppost	<b>L</b> AMPpost	2	<b>LAMP</b> -oste
Catholic	<b>C</b> Atholic	2/3	<b>KATH</b> -alick
exposure	exp <b>O</b> sure	3	exp- <b>OH</b> -zur
probably	<b>P</b> RObably	3	<b>PRAH</b> -bubb-lee
passenger	<b>P</b> ASSenger	3	<b>PASS</b> -en-jur
cucumber	<b>C</b> UCumber	3	<b>KYOO</b> -kum-ber
expensive	ex <b>P</b> ENsive	3	ek- <b>SPENS</b> -iv
royalty	<b>R</b> OYalty	3	<b>ROY</b> - ul-tee
decision	de <b>C</b> ISion	3	<small>*has French soft "J"</small>
determine	de <b>T</b> ERmine	3	dee- <b>TURR</b> -minn
ravenous	<b>R</b> AVenous	3	<b>RAAH</b> -vinn-uss
curvature	<b>C</b> URVature	3	<b>KERV</b> -ach-yure
excellent	<b>E</b> Xcellent	3	<b>EK</b> -sell-ent
rivaling	<b>R</b> Ivaling	3	<b>RYE</b> -vull-ing
emphasis	<b>E</b> Mphasis	3	<b>EM</b> -fa-siss
prevalent	<b>P</b> REValent	3	<b>PRE</b> -vahl-ent
encourage	en <b>C</b> OURage	3	en- <b>KOOR</b> -aje
remember	re <b>M</b> EMber	3	--
flamingo	fla <b>M</b> INGgo	3	--
endlessly	<b>E</b> NDlessly	3	--
delicious	de <b>L</b> icious	3	dee- <b>LIH</b> -shuss
compulsive	com <b>P</b> ULsive	3	kum- <b>PUL</b> -siv
teenagers	<b>T</b> EE <b>N</b> agers	3	<b>TEEN</b> -ay-gerz
etiquette	<b>E</b> TTiquette	3	<b>EH</b> - ti- kett
contribute	con <b>T</b> RIBute	3	kun- <b>TRIB</b> -yoot
contribution	con <b>T</b> rib <b>U</b> tion	4	kon-tri- <b>BYOO</b> -shun
flavour	<b>F</b> LA <b>v</b> our	3	<b>FLAY</b> -ver
attitude	<b>A</b> TTitude	3	--
headliner	<b>H</b> EADliner	3	<b>HED</b> -lyner
athletic	Ath <b>L</b> ETic	3	--
determine	de <b>T</b> ERmine	3	dee- <b>TUR</b> -min
famine	<b>F</b> AMine	2	<b>FAAM</b> -in
direction	dir <b>E</b> CTION	3	dir- <b>EK</b> -shun
represents	repre <b>S</b> ENTS	3	rep-ree- <b>ZENTS</b>
syllable	<b>S</b> YLLable	3	<b>SILL</b> -u-bull

strategic	stra <b>TE</b> gic	3	stra- <b>TEE</b> -jik
anyway	<b>AN</b> yway	3	<b>ENN</b> -ee-way
imaging	<b>IM</b> aging	3	<b>IM</b> -ah-jing
position	po <b>SI</b> tion	3	puh- <b>ZI</b> -shun
president	<b>PRE</b> Sident	3	<b>PREZ</b> -ih-dent
management	<b>MAN</b> agement	3	<b>MAN</b> -ij-ment
ongoing	<b>ON</b> going	3	
exposure	ex <b>POS</b> ure	3	
presumably	pre <b>SUM</b> ably	4	pree- <b>ZOOM</b> -uh-blee
exceptional	ex <b>CEPT</b> ional	4	ek- <b>SEP</b> -shun-al
fortunately	<b>FOR</b> tunately	4	<b>FOR</b> -chun-et-lee
miserable	<b>MIS</b> erable	4	<b>MIZ</b> -er-a-bel
elevator	<b>EL</b> evator	4	<b>ELL</b> -a-vay-ter
ultimately	<b>UL</b> timately	4	<b>UHL</b> -ti-mit-ly
ruminating	<b>RU</b> minating	4	<b>ROO</b> -minn-ay-ting
superior	su <b>PER</b> ior	4	soo- <b>PEER</b> -ee-or
theatrical	the <b>A</b> trical	4	thee- <b>AAH</b> -tri-kal
mechanism	<b>MECH</b> anism	4	<b>MECK</b> -an-i-zim
realistic	real <b>IST</b> ic	4	ree-all- <b>ISS</b> -tik
comfortable	<b>COM</b> fortable	4	<b>KUM</b> -fortahble
remarkable	re <b>MARK</b> able	4	re- <b>MARK</b> -ah-bull
educated	<b>ED</b> ucated	4	<b>ED</b> -yoo-cay-ted
intuition	intu <b>I</b> tion	4	in-too- <b>IH</b> -shun
usually	<b>U</b> sually	4	<b>YOO</b> -zhu-all-ee
political	po <b>LIT</b> ical	4	po- <b>LIT</b> -i-cal
delectable	de <b>LECT</b> able	4	dee- <b>LEKT</b> -ah-bull
incredible	in <b>CRED</b> ible	4	In- <b>KRED</b> -ib-ull
incredibly	in <b>CRED</b> ibly	4	in- <b>KRED</b> -ib -lee
development	de <b>VEL</b> opment	4	--
developmental	develo <b>P</b> MENTal	5	--
refridgerator	re <b>FRIDG</b> erator	5	re- <b>FRIJ</b> -erator
volunteerism	volun <b>TEER</b> ism	5	vol-un- <b>TEER</b> -i-zum
unquantifiable	unquanti <b>FI</b> able	6	un-kwon-ti- <b>FY</b> -a-ble
rejoice	re <b>JOICE</b>	2	re- <b>JOYSE</b>
rejoicing	re <b>JOIC</b> ing	3	re- <b>JOYSS</b> -ing

**A VERB can be turned into a NOUN as follows:**

WORD	CORRECT EMPHASIS	# of SYLLABLES	PHONETIC PRONUNCIATION (exactly how it sounds)
animate } animation } argument } argumentative } manipulate (verb) } Manipulation (noun) }	<u>A</u> nimate anim <u>A</u> tion <u>AR</u> gument argu <u>MEN</u> tative manipulate EG: It was easy to manipulate the dough I was kneading to make my bread. Manipulation EG: A perfect example of manipulation is when she made her mother feel guilty about leaving.	3 4 3 4 4 5	<u>Ah</u> -nim-ayte ah-nim- <u>A</u> -shun <u>AR</u> -gyoo-ment Ar-gyoo-MEN-tative man- <u>IP</u> -yoo-layte man-ip-yoo- <u>LAY</u> -shun
continue } continuation } elocute } elocution } imagine } imagination } interest } interesting }	con <u>TIN</u> ue continu <u>A</u> tion <u>EL</u> ocute elo <u>CU</u> tion im <u>A</u> gine imagin <u>A</u> tion <u>IN</u> terest <u>IN</u> teresting	3 5 3 4 3 5 3 4	kon- <u>TIN</u> -yew kon-tin-yoo- <u>WAY</u> -shun <u>ELL</u> -oh-kyoot ell-o- <u>KYOO</u> -shun im- <u>AAH</u> -jin im-aah-jin- <u>AY</u> -shun <u>IN</u> -ter-est <u>IN</u> -terr-esst-ing
articulate (verb) articulate (adjective) compete (verb) competitive (adjective) competition (noun) competitor (noun) occur occurrence recommend recommendation recognize recognition spectacle spectacular	articulate EG-“That word is easy to articulate” Articulate EG-“He is an articulate conversationalist.” com <u>PETE</u> com <u>PET</u> itive compe <u>TI</u> tion com <u>PET</u> itor o <u>CCUR</u> o <u>CCUR</u> ence reco <u>MMEND</u> recommen <u>A</u> tion <u>REC</u> ognize recogn <u>I</u> tion <u>SPEC</u> tacle spec <u>TAC</u> ular	4 4 2 4 4 4 2 3 3 5 3 4 3 4	ar- <u>TIK</u> -yoo-layte ar- <u>TIK</u> -yoo-lit kum - <u>PEET</u> kum- <u>PET</u> -it-ive kom-pe- <u>TI</u> -shun kum- <u>PET</u> -it-tor oh- <u>KURR</u> oh- <u>KURR</u> -ense rek-uh- <u>MEND</u> rek-o-mend- <u>AY</u> -shun <u>REK</u> -og-nyze rek-og- <u>NI</u> -shun <u>SPEK</u> -tack-ul spek- <u>TACK</u> -yoo-lar

relative (noun)	<b>REL</b> ative EG-“My uncle is one of my relatives.”	3	<b>REL</b> -a-tiv
relatively (adverb)	rela <b>TIV</b> ely EG-“The earth is relatively closer to the Moon than the Sun.”	4	rel-a- <b>TIV</b> -lee
relation (noun)	re <b>L</b> ation EG-“My uncle is a relation of mine.”	3	ree- <b>LAY</b> -shun
relationship (noun)	re <b>L</b> ationship EG-“My cats get along well and have a good relationship, unlike my dogs who don't get along and have a challenging relationship.”	4	ree- <b>LAY</b> -shun-ship
expect	ex <b>PECT</b>	2	eks- <b>PEKT</b>
expectation	expect <b>A</b> tion	4	eks-pekt- <b>A</b> -shun
necessary	<b>NEC</b> -ess-a-ry	4	<b>NESS</b> -ess-air-ee
necessarily	nec-ess- <b>A</b> -ri-ly	5	<b>NESS</b> -ess-air-ill-lee
obliged	o- <b>BLIGED</b>	2	oh- <b>BLYJD</b>
obligated	<b>O</b> -bli-ga-ted	4	<b>AHH</b> -blih-gayte-ed
obligation	<b>O</b> -bli-ga-tion	4	<b>AHH</b> -blih-gay-shun
compartment	com- <b>PART</b> -ment	3	kum- <b>PART</b> -ment
compartmentalize	com-part- <b>MENT</b> -al-ize	5	kum-part- <b>MENT</b> -al-yze
opportunist	opp-or- <b>TUN</b> -ist	4	opp-or- <b>TOON</b> -ist
opportunity	opp-or- <b>TUN</b> -it-y	5	opp-or- <b>TOON</b> -it-ee
opportunistic	opp-or-tun- <b>IST</b> -ic	5	opp-or-toon- <b>IST</b> -ik
detriment	<b>DET</b> -ri-ment	3	
detrimental	det-ri- <b>MEN</b> -tal	4	
paralyze	<b>PAR</b> -a-lyze	3	<b>PAIR</b> -a-lyze
paralysis	par- <b>AL</b> -y-sis	4	pair- <b>AL</b> -i-siss
penalize	<b>PEN</b> -a-lize	3	<b>PEEN</b> -a-lyze
penalty	<b>PEN</b> -al-ty	3	<b>PENN</b> -all-tee
charisma	char- <b>IS</b> -ma	3	kar- <b>IZ</b> -mah
charismatic	char-is- <b>MAT</b> -ic	4	kare-iz- <b>MAT</b> -ik
habit	<b>HAB</b> it	2	<b>HA</b> -bitt
habitual	hab <b>IT</b> ual	4	ha- <b>BICH</b> -yoo-al

Below, from: <http://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/word-stress-2.htm> , adapted by Kathy

- ATHLETE
- ATHLETICS
- ATHLETICISM




Now you try these 3...

Let's take 3 words: **photograph**, **photographer** and **photographic**.

Do they sound the same when spoken? No.

Because we accentuate (stress) ONE syllable in each word.

And it is not always the same syllable. So the **shape** of each word is different.

word	shape	total syllables	stressed syllable
<b><u>PHO</u> TO GRAPH</b>		3	#1
<b>PHO <u>TO</u> GRAPH ER</b>		4	#2
<b>PHO TO <u>GRAPH</u> IC</b>		4	#3

Stress on one certain syllable happens in ALL words with 2 or more syllables. Notice that in every word below with more than one syllable, that one part of the word is pronounced a little bit louder and at a slightly higher pitch (higher sound) :

**TEACH**er, Ja**PAN**, **CHINA**, a**BOVE**, conver**SA**tion, **IN**teresting, im**PO**rtant, de**MAN**D, et**CET**era, et**CET**era, et**CET**era.

The syllables that are not stressed are 'weak' or 'small' or 'quiet'. Speakers of English listen for the STRESSED syllables, not the weak syllables. If you use word stress in your speech, you will instantly and automatically improve your pronunciation **and** your comprehension.

Try to hear the stress in individual words each time you listen to English - on the radio, or in films for example. Your first step is to HEAR and recognize it. After that, you can USE it!

### **There are 2 important rules about word stress:**

#### **1.) One word ... One stress.**

One word cannot have 2 stresses. So if you hear 2 stresses, you have heard 2 words, not one word. (Sometimes there can be a "secondary" stress in some words. But a secondary stress is much smaller than the main [primary] stress, and is only used in long words.)

#### **2.) As you pronounce a word, the stress is always on a vowel.**

You cannot stress a consonant.

## ***Why is Word Stress Important?***

Word stress is not always used in all languages. Some languages, Japanese or French for example, can pronounce each syllable with equal emphasis. Other languages, English for example, use word stress.

Word stress is not an optional extra that you can add to the English language if you want. It is **part of the language!** English speakers use word stress to communicate rapidly and accurately, even in difficult conditions. If, for example, you do not hear a word clearly, you can still understand the word because of the position of the stress.

Think again about the words **photograph** and **photographer**.

Now imagine that you are speaking to somebody by telephone over a very bad line. You cannot hear clearly. In fact, you hear only the first 2 syllables of one of these words, **photo ...** Which word is it, photograph or photographer? Of course, with word stress you will know immediately which word it is because in reality you will hear either of the following things:

**PHOto...** or **phoTO...** Without hearing the whole word, you probably know what the word is: **PHOto...graph** or **phoTO...grapher**. It's magic! (You also have the 'context' of your conversation to help you.)

This is a simple example of how word stress helps us understand English. There are many other examples. We use word stress all the time, without thinking about it. Use this exercise to absorb and get familiar with these sounds. Don't expect to do everything at once! Be patient. Frequent exposure to the correct sounds of words will help them become natural with time.