

Stress Placement in Simple Words

Simple Two-Syllable Words

They are alternatively called di-syllabic words. Under this rubric, the discussion will go through the following organization pattern: it will kick off by looking at stress assignment in verbs and adjectives, adverbs and propositions. Nouns will be the parts of speech in the ensuing last paragraph.

Verbs: if the second syllable's centre is a long monophthong or a diphthong or if it ends with more than one consonant, then it is this second syllable that bears stress:

Allow, announce, believe, embark, alert, perform, construct, produce, annoy, assist, arrive, seduce, attempt, beseech, belie, transform, proclaim, explain, induce, seduce, enhance, empower, etc.

If the second syllable contains a short vowel and one or no consonant, then it is the first syllable that bears stress:

Enter, open, equal, etc.

If the second syllable contains the closing diphthong, /@U/, then it is the first syllable that receives stress. As in, borrow, follow.

Two syllable adjectives seem to abide by the same rules as verbs:

Lovely, even, divine, correct, corrupt.

Disyllabic adverbs and even their preposition counterparts obey the selfsame rule discussed above.

Nouns, however, should be treated as a glaringly distinct category because they call for divergent stress-assignment rules. Here again, we go straight to the phonological make-up of the second syllable. If the second syllable's centre is a short monophthong, then it is the first syllable that receives stress. If this pattern does not obtain, then stress falls on the second syllable proper:

Monkey, product, syllable, pattern, second.

Machine, marine, receipt, design, raccoon, balloon.

Three-Syllable Words

They are otherwise labeled tri-syllabic words. It is worthy of mention here that as the category of words discussed above, there is an extricable link holding between the grammatical category and stress placements.

Verbs: if the last syllable contains a short vowel and ends with not more than one consonant, then it is the middle syllable that bears stress.

If the last syllable contains a long monophthong, a diphthong or ends with more than one consonant, then it is this syllable to which stress is assigned.

Nouns: if the final syllable contains a short vowel or /@U/, then stress is not allocated to this syllable. If the middle syllable contains a long vowel, diphthong or ends with more than one consonant, then stress falls on this syllable proper.

If the final syllable contains a short vowel and the middle syllable a short vowel and not more than one consonant, then it is the first that bears stress.

If the last syllable contains a long vowel, diphthong or ends with more than one consonant, then, the first one is the stress-bearer.

Stress Placement in Complex Words

Stress-Bearing Suffixes

They are a set of suffixes in English, some of them used a lot in complex-words formation which are the recipient to stress themselves. If seen in a word, then the most probable site for stress is the suffix proper.

Ain, as in entertain and ascertain;

Eer: as in voluntary: volunteer; mountain: mountaineer, engineer;

Ee: as in refuge: refugee; address: addressee, refer: referee;

Ese: as in China, Chinese, Vietnam: vietnamse;

Esque as in picture: picturesque.

Stress-Shifting Suffixes

These suffixes, as their name demonstrates, serve to shift the position of stress. What does mean, however? How does this shift happen? Because suffixes are added for the formation of new words, their addition might necessitate changes, some of them purely graphological. The suffix 'ly' when used to form adverbs and very rarely adjectives brings about the following changes to adjectives that end in 'y': the 'y' has to be substituted by 'i' before the addition of the suffix.

To the nitty gritty now, there are some other suffices which impart a different change to words, accentual pattern change (to do with stress placement). In other words, the simple word and the same word attached to a suffix do not share identical stress pattern due the insertion of the suffix. These suffixes, to put it more conspicuously, make stress shift forward. That is, if in the simple word stress falls on the second syllable, then in the same word made complex stress falls on the third. The following are those suffixes:

Eous: courage: courageous;

Iuos: injury: injurious;

Ive: product: productive, seduce seductive;

Ity: immune: immunity, person: personality;

Graphy: photo: photography;

Ial: adverb: adverbial; proverb, proverbial;

Ion: anticipate: anticipation; violate: violation;

Ty: as in central centrality, marginal marginality;

Ic: embryo: embryonic; horror horrific, terror terrific.

Suffixes That Do not Influence Stress Placement

The overwhelming bulk of the most productive of English suffixes, much to the learner's academic relief, do not interfere with the stress pattern of the word where they appear. That is, their presence though it might alter the grammatical category of the word and/or its lexical significance, it does not impact its accentual pattern:

Able: love: loveable, predict: predictable;

Age: link: linkage;

Al; identity identical, deny denial;

En: danger, endanger; worse: worsen;

Ful: delight: delightful; tact: tactful;

Ing: rage: enraging; lend: lending;

Ish: fever: feverish; long: longish: child: childish;

Like: child, childlike;

Less: fireless, friendless: internet, internetless, help, helpless;

Ment: manage; management; harass: harassment;

Ness: soft: softness; deaf deafness;

Ous: fame, famous, hilarity hilarious;

Fy: beauty beautify, magnitude magnify;

Wise: like: likewise;

Y: luck, lucky sun sunny;

Ish; as in long, longish, grey grayish;

Ing: as in smoke smoking, love, loving;

Er, or, ar: as in teach, teacher act actor tract tractor.
