

Word Stress in Complex Words

The least intuitive syllable stress patterns are those associated with suffixes. There are so many suffixes that affect where stress will fall in a word that memorizing them all can be overwhelming.

At first glance, stressed syllables based on suffixes appear to not follow any pattern at all. For instance, the words *classic*, *specific*, and *economic* all include the *-ic* suffix. They are stressed on the first, second, and third syllables, respectively. The stress patterns can only be found when it is understood that syllables must be counted from the end of the word toward the beginning of the word. In fact, the words *classic*, *specific*, and *economic* all follow the same pattern of being stressed on the syllable before the *-ic* suffix.

Suffix-derived Stress Patterns

The following suffixes/endings cause specific word stress patterns.

1) Stress on the suffix

- **-ee**, employee: em-**ploy-EE**
- **-eer**, engineer: en-**gin-EER**
- **-ese**, Japanese: Jap-an-**ESE**
- **esque-**, picturesque
- **ain-**, entertain

2) Stress is placed on the second syllable from the end.

- -cient, **ancient**
- -cious, **delicious**
- -tious, **ambitious**
- **-ic**, specific: **specific**
- -ive, **productive**
- -ial, **adverbial**
- -eous, **courageous**

3) Suffixes placing stress on the third syllable from the end

- **-cy**, agency: A-**gen-cy**
- **-ify**, identify: i-**DENT-i-fy**
- **-ate**, decorate: **DEC-or-ate**
- **-ize**, **minimize**
- -ity, **celebrity**
- -ative, **comparative**

4) Suffixes neither receiving stress nor affecting its position

- -able, **understandable**
- -ship, **leadership**

- -hood, **boy**hood
- -al, **refusal**
- -ful, **beautiful**
- -less, **helpless**
- -ness, **kindness**
- -ment, **Government**
- -age, **postage**
- -en, **widen**
- -ing, **helping**
- -ish, **childish**
- -like, **childlike**
- -ous, **famous**
- fy, **certify**
- -wise, **likewise**
- -er, **compute** . **computer**

Exercise: Place the stress mark on the appropriate syllable.

Invitee, Enthusiastic, Chinese, phonology, fascinate, facility, production

Resource: from

<https://pronuncian.com/syllable-stress-derived-suffixes>