

Introduction to Sentence Stress

Sentence Stress

Sentence stress is considered as **free** because it is largely determined by the meaning to be conveyed. Some words are predisposed by their function in the language to receive the accent. They are called content (lexical words): main verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs.

Content words have in connected speech the qualitative pattern of their isolated forms; therefore, they retain some qualitative prominence even when no pitch is associated to them and when they are relatively unstressed.

Function words (grammatical, structural words) belong to the category of unstressed words, but they may be exceptionally stressed if the meaning requires it. They are words such as auxiliary verbs, modals, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, articles...

Many function words may have 2 or more qualitative and quantitative patterns according to whether they are accented or unaccented.

*The accented form is called the 'strong form' and the unaccented form is called the 'weak form'

* If we want to show stress and intonation at sentence level, several principles should be kept in mind:

- In isolation every word has a primary stress (although stress of monosyllabic words is not indicated).
- Monosyllabic words are not stressed in isolation; however, they always receive stress in a sentence.
- In words stress we identified different degrees of stress, we may do so in sentence stress, too.
- In sentence stress, the last syllable is the strongest. It is called the nucleus (in neutral intonation)

* Sentence stress falls on the **stressed syllable** of all the **content words**; however, the nucleus depends on the meaning to be conveyed. Transcribe these words.

Sort objection international

Transcribe this sentence now.

It's an international committee.

* Function words may carry sentence stress if **emphasized**.

I don't think I can do it.

But I think you can do it.

* **Polysyllabic** function words may carry sentence stress.

behind ago until

* **Adverbs** are usually stressed, even if they are technically **structural words**.

It's too late to change our minds.

* **Adverbs of position** carry sentence stress.

I'm not coming here again.

I left it over there.

* **Demonstratives** carry sentence stress.

This book is really worth reading.

That's the stupidest idea I've ever heard.

* **Negatives** are stressed.

I'm not coming here again.

We can't expect everything.

I hope you won't be annoyed.

* **Interrogative pronouns** carry sentence stress.

Why are they here?

Activity: Mark stress in this dialogue.

Ben: Honey, I'm home.

Maria: Hi! How are you? How was your day at work?

Ben: It was great! I got a promotion! I'll have more responsibilities

in the office, but the best news is that I'll have more

Maria: You're sorry? You're sorry??? I'm afraid 'sorry'

isn't good enough. I've already told them you're

going, Ben!

money at

the end of the month.

Maria: That's great! Congratulations! I'm really happy

Ben: Unfortunately! I have to go to a conference this weekend so I

won't be able to go to dinner with your parents this Friday.

Sorry to let you down.

Ben: I know, I know. And I am sorry about it. But as long

You have the chance to see them, it's okay, right?

Maria: Fine. But we're going to dinner with them next

Friday. No excuses.

Linking/ Liaison

1. In connected speech, we sometimes link words together. The most familiar case is the use of **linking /r/**. The final phoneme /r/ is not pronounced in final position in RP, except when it is followed by a word starting with a vowel.

Activity 1: Transcribe the following:

Phrases/ Sentences	Transcription
our eggs for ever teacher of English care about here and there it's quite far away it's near here the doctor agrees there are three places there's a tour along the river it's made of fur and leather law and order the actor and playwright I can't hear anything He opened the door and walked in	

2. Many RP speakers use r to link words ending with vowels. This is called **intrusive /r/**

Activity 2: Transcribe the following showing using intrusive /r/

Phrases	Transcription
media event Australia or New Zealand idea of it	

