

## STRESS IN SIMPLE WORDS

### I. Two syllable simple words

- **Stress on the first syllable:** Mostly in two-syllable nouns & adjectives the stress falls on the first syllable. E.g: PRESENT /'preznt/, EXPORT /'eksɔ:t/, CHINA /'tʃaɪnə/, TABLE /'teɪbl/, CAMERA /'kæmərə/. But there are some exceptions such as: HEATHROW /,hi:θ'rəʊ/.
- **Stress on the last syllable:** Most of two-syllable verbs receive the stress on the second syllable. E.g.: preSENT /pri'zent/, exPORT /ɪk'spɔ:t/, deCIDE /di'saɪd/, beGIN /bɪ'gɪn/, reCORD /'rekɔ:d/.

#### A) Verbs

The basic rule for verbs is that the second syllable receives stress if this second syllable of the verb contains a long vowel, diphthong, or if it ends with more than one consonant – that is, consonant cluster. E.g: Apply / ə'plaɪ /, Attract /ə'trækt/, Arrive /ə'raɪv/, Begin /bɪ'gɪn/, Perceive/ pə'si:v/, survive /sə'vaɪv/, Suggest /sə'dʒest/, Forget /fə'get/, Forsake / fə'seɪk/.

Exceptions: If the second syllable contains a short vowel, the first syllable is stressed. E.g: Enter /'entə/, Open /'əʊpən/, Equal /'i:kwəl/, Envy /'envi/.

#### B) Adjectives

Two-syllable simple adjectives are stressed on the first syllable. E.g: Honest/'ɒnɪst/, tasty / 'teɪsti/, Even /'i:vən /, Hollow /'hɒləʊ/, Perfect /'pɜ:fɪkt/ or /'pɜ:fekt/, sleepy /'sli:pi/.

Exceptions: Sometimes adjectives are stressed on the second syllable if the second syllable contains a long vowel or a diphthong. E.g.: Alive /ə'laɪv/, Exact /ɪg'zækt/, Concise /kən'saɪs/, Precise /prə'saɪs/.

#### C) Nouns

Similar to adjectives, nouns are often stressed on the first syllable, particularly if this syllable contains a long vowel or a diphthong. E.g.: Money /'mʌni/, Circus /'sɜ:kəs/, Product/'prɒdʌkt/, Jacket /'dʒækt/, Autumn /'ɔ:təm/, Creature /'kri:tʃə/.

Exceptions: If the first syllable contains a short vowel (e.g., /ə/), the stress will usually fall on the second syllable. E.g.: Balloon /bə'lu:n/, Design/dɪ'zaɪn/, Surprise/ sə'praɪz/.

**N.B:** The syllable which contains the schwa /ə/ is mostly unstressed.

#### D) Adverbs and prepositions

Other two-syllable words such as adverbs and prepositions seem to behave like verbs, nouns, and adjectives. The first syllable receives the stress if it contains a long vowel or diphthong. E.g.: Almost/'ɔ:lməʊst/; Always /'ɔ:lweɪz/, Loudly /'laʊdli/, Seldom /'seldəm/.

If the first syllable contains a short vowel, the stress will be on the 2nd syllable: Ahead / ə'hed/, Below /bɪ'ləʊ/, Again / ə'gen/, Inside/ɪn'saɪd/.

## II. Three syllable simple words

### A) Three syllable simple verbs

**Rule 1:** If the final syllable contains a long vowel, a diphthong or ends with more than one consonant, the stress will fall on that syllable (i.e., the 3rd syllable).

*Examples:* intervene /,ɪntə'veɪn/, introduce /,ɪntrə'dju:s/, entertain /,entə'teɪn/.

**Rule 2:** If the last syllable contains a short vowel and ends with no more than one consonant, that syllable will be unstressed, and the stress falls on the preceding syllable (i.e., the 2<sup>nd</sup> from the end).

*Examples:* encounter /ɪn'kaʊntə(r)/, acknowledge /ək'nɒlɪdʒ/, establish /ɪ'stæblɪʃ/.

**ACTIVITY 1:** Transcribe the following words and identify the rule governing stress placement in each one.

WORDS	TRANSCRIPTION	STRESS RULE	WORDS	TRANSCRIPTION	STRESS RULE
Abandon			Imagine		
Accredit			Interrupt		
Deliver			Represent		
Determine			Resurrect		
Develop			Understand		

### B) Three syllable simple nouns

**Rule 1:** If the final syllable contains a short vowel or the diphthong / əʊ /, it will be unstressed. If the syllable preceding the final syllable contains a long vowel, a diphthong or more than one consonant, the central syllable will receive the stress.

*Examples:* disaster /dɪ'zɑ:stə(r)/, professor /prə'fesə(r)/, potato /pə'tetətəʊ/, tomorrow /tə'mɒrəʊ/.

**Rule 2:** If the final syllable contains a short vowel and the central one contains a short vowel and ends with no more than one consonant; the first syllable will receive the stress.

*Examples:* cinema /'sɪnəmə/, quantity /'kwɒntəti/, character /'kærəktə(r)/, synonym /'sɪnənɪm/.

*Exceptions:* most of the rules mentioned before show stress on the syllable containing a long vowel, a diphthong or ending with more than one consonant. However, if the final syllable contains a long vowel or end with more than one consonant, the stress can sometimes fall on the 1st syllable.

*Examples:* yesterday /'jestədeɪ/, substitute /'sʌbstɪtju:t/.

### C) Three syllable simple adjectives (and other words types)

Three syllable adjectives and adverbs follow the same rules as nouns to determine stress placement.

**ACTIVITY 2:** Transcribe the following words and identify the rule governing stress placement in each one.

WORDS	TRANSCRIPTION	STRESS RULE	WORDS	TRANSCRIPTION	STRESS RULE
Accident			Opportune		
Cathedral			Popular		
Embargo			Synopsis		
Innocent			Tobacco		
Insolent			Tomato		