

General Statements on English Stress

*In English, every content word has one strong-stressed syllable. We stress the vowel sound in that syllable. Function words are not stressed, apart from pronouns at the end of a clause (I know **him**.) or in intonation (He **is** helpful.)*

Generally, a word is stressed on the nearest strong syllable to the end. A strong syllable is one with a long vowel sound (e.g. ar, ee), a diphthong (e.g. ai, ei), or a short vowel sound (not a schwa) plus consonant (e.g. in one-syllable words: big, hat). A weak syllable has the pattern: v (vowel) or cv (consonant-vowel) or cvc (with a schwa).

Take any word set and find the stressed syllable in each word. Discuss which statements apply to which words and match the cards with the statements; then put the words into groups according to the spelling and sounds statements (see p.66).

A. The final syllable is strong: often in two-syllable verbs (**avoid**, **receive**) and when the suffix is stressed (**engineer**, **Chinese**). One-syllable content words are stressed on the whole word (**buy**, **cow**).

B. The penultimate (next to final) syllable is strong: often in words with suffixes, which are not usually stressed (**plumber**, **information**).

C. The antepenultimate (next to penultimate) is strong: if the final and penultimate are both weak (**cinema**, **emergency**). If this syllable is also weak, we have to keep moving back until we find a strong syllable.

Here are some notable exceptions:

D. Compound nouns are stressed on the first part: (**bookshop**; **popcorn**).

E. Both parts of phrasal verbs are stressed: (**wake up**, **put on**).

F. Acronyms are stressed on the final syllable: (**BBC**, **DVD**).

G. A small group of words (homographs) are spelled the same but have different stress depending on the type of word: **record** (noun), **record** (verb); **produce** (noun), **produce** (verb).

Exceptions:

Say why they don't fit into any category: (**hero**, **reptile**).