



# IIT Madras

ONLINE DEGREE

**Basic English**  
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**Lecture - 39**  
**Word Stress - 3**

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**WORD STRESS - 3**

Prof. SHREESH CHAUDHARY



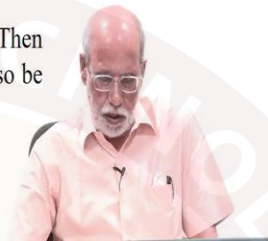
Today, we are going to talk about how to assign stress, main stress to some nouns, of course. And mainly, today, we will be talking about how to assign main stress to verbs and adjectives.

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## STRESS ON VERBS AND ADJECTIVES

- We have seen that word stress in English is not without some pattern, but it is best to do some drill and to learn to speak some frequently used but mispronounced words correctly.
- Drill will turn speaking that way into a habit. Then new words and other words not practiced can also be pronounced correctly. Do the drill.



Well, it is not the case, as we have seen so far that word stress in English is without any pattern; there is a pattern, but then for a learner, it is best that we do some drill, at least with some frequently used but mispronounced words.

And this drill can change, not only correct our mispronunciation of those words in English but it can also make that kind of pronunciation habitual for us. It will become a habit with us, so that we make no mistakes later and we have no difficulty understanding others, and others have no difficulty understanding us. A drill, as they say, bores; it helps.

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## ACTIVITY



1. Listen to this audio clip and mark all words that have two syllables or more, and see how they are stressed.

Make a special note of words that are not stressed on either the third, or the second or the final syllable. Do some special drills with these words.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vikkxwiNEErkzEp5X6qnlDXs6LlqZqt/view?usp=sharing>

Victory Speech by Kamala Harris. She is an American politician and attorney, and the Vice-President elect of the United States.

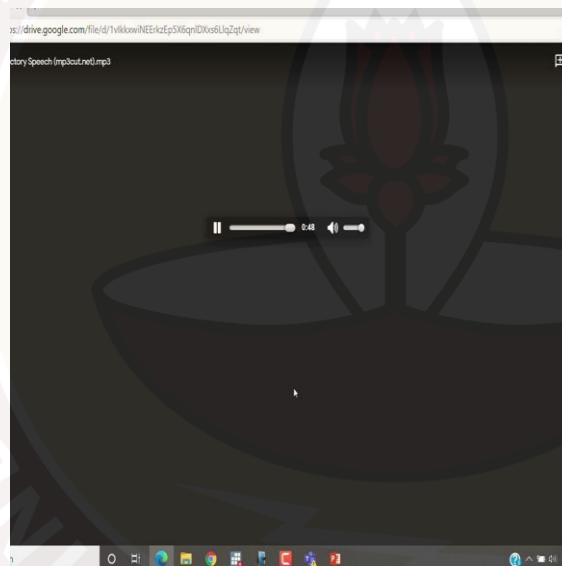


Next, I am going to play an audio clip to you once again, as I did in the earlier unit. Now, you are familiar with the method we will follow. We will play it once without a pause to you. Listen to it for its meaning.

And next, we will play it again. Listen to it for the pronunciation of some long words in this speech. Try and notice, try and see if the most prominent stress is assigned to the third syllable, to the second syllable, or to the final syllable. And you can also later do some drill with this kind of list. But let us listen to this speech first.

This is by a politician; a lady called Kamala Harris. Her family, it seems migrated to North America from India. And this speech was given by her as victory speech after her election by the American voters as the next Vice President of that great country. Please listen.

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Audio: Congressman John Lewis, before his passing, wrote, 'Democracy is not a state, it is an act.' And what he meant was that America's democracy is not guaranteed. It is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it (crowd cheers)to guard it, and never take it for granted. And protecting our democracy takes struggle, it takes sacrifice. But there is joy in it, and there is progress because we the people have the power to build a better future.

Professor: We will play it again to you. But this time please, you see some monosyllabic words; some words of 1 syllable are also stressed as is natural in a speech. In a group of words, some words get stressed at regular intervals; there might be a monosyllabic word as well.

But it is in long words, words of more than 2 or 3 syllables, or two syllables that English has a fixed choice. Each word, the word is, stress is assigned almost uniquely. So this time when you hear, please pay attention to the pronunciation of long words in this speech and see which part of this speech is stressed. Here we go.

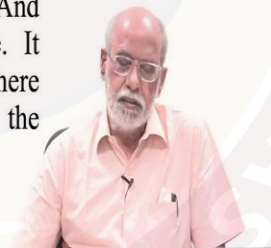
Audio: Congressman John Lewis, before his passing, wrote, 'Democracy is not a state, it is an act.' And what he meant was that America's democracy is not guaranteed. It is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it (crowd cheers) to guard it, and never take it for granted. And protecting our democracy takes struggle, it takes sacrifice. But there is joy in it, and there is progress because we the people have the power to build a better future.

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## TRANSCRIPT



Congressman John Lewis, before his passing, wrote: "Democracy is not a state. It is an act." And what he meant was that America's democracy is not guaranteed. It is only as strong as our willingness to fight for it, to guard it and never take it for granted. And protecting our democracy takes struggle. It takes sacrifice. But there is joy in it, and there is progress. Because we the people have the power to build a better future.



Professor: We will bring the text to you. While you make your list of long words, we will give you about a minute. Make a list of long words, and we will bring the text here before you, please take a look.


And after about a minute, when you have made a note of, or checked, or corrected your own notes made already of the long words in this speech, we will play them again and see which part of each of these long words is stressed. So we will let you look at it for about a minute.

Audio: Congressman John Lewis, before his passing, wrote, 'Democracy is not a state, it is an act.' And what he meant was that America's democracy is not guaranteed. It is only as strong

as our willingness to fight for it (crowd cheers) to guard it, and never take it for granted. And protecting our democracy takes struggle, it takes sacrifice. But there is joy in it, and there is progress because we the people have the power to build a better future.

Professor: I hope you have had time to mark stresses on different parts of the long words that have been used here. To help you, we have also created a table of these words, and we have shown which part of these words, which parts of these words have been stressed by the speaker. Please compare your stress assignment with the ones given here.

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2. With the book, *Better Spoken English*, do the drill also with words given in Chapter 7, Page Nos. 90-96.

Well, you see the best way to get it right is to do the drill with a list of or more than one list of frequently-occurring words and frequently-occurring mispronounced words so that in any situation, other words are okay with you, you do them right. It is only a few words that you and I do not do right all the time.

So on this list, you will find those words which are frequently used but are mispronounced. So it is a good idea to do them the right way, to do the drill so that they become a habit with you.

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- Some English nouns are also stressed upon the final syllable. See the following examples.



a'buse	ac'count	after'noon
ba'loon	ca'nal	de'gree
de'lay	de'light	de'sign
dis'pute	fa'tigue	kanga'roo
po'lice	re'ceipt	re'gret
re'quest	re'cruit	re'volt
rou'tine		sa'loon



Then, not only these words with which you drill but also those others which ought to be pronounced this way, but are not just now may be corrected. And you will get an across-the-table grip on all sorts of words; long or short. Let us go to the next screen, please.

As I said, yesterday, we looked at English nouns, and we saw that some nouns are stressed on the third syllable from the end, some nouns are stressed on the second syllable from the end. Or you can put it the other way around; some nouns are stressed on the first syllable from the beginning, sorry, the first syllable from the beginning, some are stressed on the second syllable from the beginning.

So there is this kind of tendencies, there is this kind of patterns. Some nouns in English are also stressed upon the last syllable, upon the final syllable. Look at the words before you; this is abuse, main stress on the last syllable, final syllable; account, not on ac but on the count, account; afternoon, no stress or little stress on after but long prominent stress upon noon.

So with balloon, canal, degree, delay, you can go on. You can compare your own pronunciation of these words and if they do not agree, if there is any difference between the way you pronounce them and the pronunciation given here, then please relearn the pronunciation of these words and through the drill, get them right in no time.



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- Just as in Nouns, Verbs and Adjectives also follow some patterns. Verbs and Adjectives are mostly stressed on the final or pre-final syllable. See the following for examples.



Let us go to the, as I said before, English has all kinds of patterns. It assigns stress to words, to syllables with long vowels. It assigns stress to vowels which are followed by more than one consonant in the language, technical language; in the language of grammarians, it is called heavy syllable.

A heavy syllable is a syllable that is, that has either a long vowel or long or short, it is followed by more than one consonant. So usually, a heavy syllable, the one which has a long vowel or which is followed by more than one consonant, the heavy syllable tends to take the stress. Let us look at some examples.

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## STRESS ON ENGLISH VERBS



Verbs stressed on pre-final syllable	Verb stressed on final syllable
a'bolish	a'bide
as'tonish	ac'cept
con'sider	ad'just
con'tinue	ad'mit
de'liver	a'gree
de'posit	ar'range
de'velop	ar'rest
di'minish	be'gin
dis'cover	be'have
de'terminate	com'mit





Here is a list of words with long vowels. The initial syllable, the first syllable has, look at the column on my left or column to your left. The first syllable has short vowels, a, hardly heard, hardly 100 nanoseconds long. But the other syllable, the one after that, second syllable from left has a long vowel.

And English vowels tend to be longer than the vowels in many other Indian, many other languages, including many Indian languages. So the word is pronounced abolish, main stress on bo; astonish, consider, continue, deliver, deposit, develop, diminish, discover, determine.

If you do drill in this manner, you will get them right in no time. But there are verbs which are also stressed on the final syllable. And once again, because they have a long vowel there, or because they have more than one consonant following the vowel. So, for instance, we have to abide, accept, adjust, admit, agree, arrange, arrest, etc. You may; you can go in this manner. Next.

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## ACTIVITY



4. You can add to this list of verbs that are frequently used but mispronounced.

Remember these words and others on their pattern are stressed on the pre-final or final syllables. If you do not pronounce them that way, then check with the dictionary and re-learn their pronunciation through drills.



Actually, it may be a good idea for you to add to this list of verbs that are frequently used but mispronounced. This will not only; you can then do some drill with them. And remember, these words and other words of this pattern are stressed on the pre-final or final syllable. If you do not pronounce them that way, then check with the dictionary and relearn their pronunciation through drills.

These drills will not only correct your mispronunciation of these words, but they will help you do other words with which you have not practised them now also correctly. That is in

language, once your habit changes, it changes across the board. All words of that pattern will automatically stand corrected in your pronunciation, and you will be able to speak Standard English, and you will be understood by speakers of Standard English. Go to the next.

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- Like verbs, most adjectives in English are also stressed on the final or pre-final syllable. See following examples.



Just as verbs, adjectives can also be stressed in English. Adjectives can also be stressed either on the final or on the pre-final syllable. Look at some examples.

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### STRESS IN ENGLISH ADJECTIVES



On pre-final syllable	On final syllable
a'bundant	a'brupt
ad'jacent	ab'surd
'blatant	a'fraid
con'versant	con'sistent
cons'istent	di'vergent
a'nother	cor'rect
'bankrupt	di'rect
con'sistent	di'vine
in'sistent	e'nough
im'portant	pre'cise
se'vere	sub'lime



On the left-hand column, I have adjectives which are stressed on the pre-final syllable. On the right-hand, I have, right-hand column, I have adjectives that are stressed on the final syllable.

And once again, either the stressed syllable has a long vowel, or it is that the vowel here, the vowel in this syllable is followed by more than one consonant.

It is a general pattern; you cannot say this is the exceptionless rule, no. So, for instance, we have abundant, the main stress is on bund, which is the pre-final syllable. Adjacent, pre-final syllable again, adja; or blatant, the pre-final is bla. But on my right hand, we have words like abrupt, final syllable. Here, the vowel a is followed by /p/ /t/. So you have abrupt in a spoken language. In written language, you have u followed by p and t. So you have to do abrupt, absurd, afraid, consistent.

Though vowel is short in the second syllable in this word, consistent, it is /i/, not /ii/. Yet, because it is followed by two consonants, /s/, and /t/; it gets a stressed. It is consistent, divergent, correct, direct, and you can go on. Make your own list of similar words, frequently-occurring mispronounced words, correct their, your own pronunciation, and if your friends speak that way, also change, help them change their pronunciation, and you will feel that you are speaking Standard English and you are being understood by speakers of Standard English. Next.

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## ACTIVITY



5. Without looking up a dictionary, make a list of adjectives from your memory and see if you stress them on their final, or pre-final or upon some other syllable. In all cases of difference between your existing pronunciation and the one give above follow the pronunciation given above.



Well, let us make the activity a little tough for us. Let us climb the Mount Everest now. We have been on smaller hills for the last few days, so without looking up a dictionary, and it is entirely up to you. There are some people who say, who cheat even when nobody is watching

them. Well, good luck to them. If you enjoy cheating yourself, then there is no problem. But that is not how you learn.

You learn when you sweat when you trust yourself when you give yourself a chance to make mistakes. And when you relearn, then learning is (*pakka*), there you learn for the rest of your life, and you also help others learn for the rest of their lives.

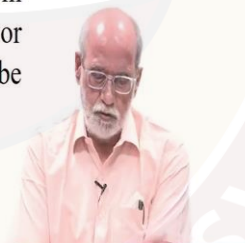
So without looking up a dictionary, make a list of adjectives from your memory and see if you stress them on their final syllable, or on the pre-final syllable, or on some other words. In all cases of differences between your existing pronunciation, you should see, and the one given above, not below; given above, you should learn the pronunciation indicated above or in the dictionary. So relearn, it is not difficult; it is not impossible.

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## ACTIVITY



6. You can add to this list by looking up dictionary for frequently used but mispronounced words. See the following list of words taken from the dictionary at random and decide if they are nouns, verbs or adjectives and where each them should be stressed.



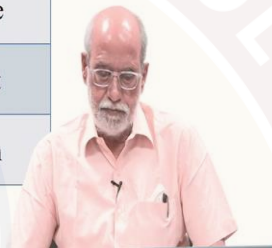
You can also add to this list actually. Lookup a dictionary or your own memory for frequently-used words of this pattern; more verbs, more nouns, more adjectives, which are stressed on the pre-final or the final syllable and you will find that you have shown become an author from your own experience.

You are doing the spoken language, not only you are doing the spoken language right yourself, but you are also helping others do that. So that is why I have said you can add to this list by looking up a dictionary for frequently-used but mispronounced words.

See the following list of words that have been taken from the dictionary at random and decide if they are nouns, verbs, or adjectives, and where each of them should be stressed. I am, it is a self-test. Go next.

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absolute	arsenic	academic
Arabic	catholic	career
anonymous	certificate	chandelier
cosmic	cosmetic	degree
degree	engineer	Japanese
fanatic	lunatic	scientist
sincere	unity	vacation



Look at these words. Is absolute a noun, or an adjective, or a verb? You have to decide. We have given the answer towards the end of this unit, but you have to decide whether it is an absurd, or so. For absolute, arsenic, academic, all kinds of words; degree, Japanese, fanatic, scientist, sincere, vacation.

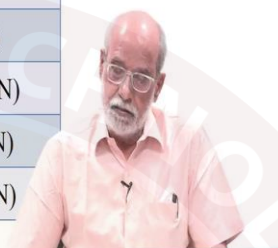
So look at this random list of words and check your own pronunciation of these words. If they differ from the one indicated in the dictionary, then learn or relearn the pronunciation of these words as given in the dictionary.

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- Check with the stress marks given below. In case of any differences, relearn to speak that word correctly with proper stress, etc.



'absolute (A)	'arsenic (A)	aca'demic (A)
'Arabic (A)	'catholic (N)	ca'reer (N)
a'nonymous (N)	cer'tificate (N)	chande'lier (N)
'cosmic (A)	cos'metic (A)	de'gree (N)
de'gree (N)	engi'neer (N)	Japa'nese (N)
fa'natic (Adj)	'lunatic (A)	'scientist (N)
sin'cere (A)	'unity(N)	va'cation (N)



Here is the answer. Compare your answers with these and stresses with these, and if there is a difference, correct yourself, do the drill, and relearn the correct pronunciation for the rest of your life. Next.

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Thank You



So to conclude this unit, we see that some consistent effort with this kind of guidance, nouns, verbs, adjectives, final, pre-final syllables, and your own hard work with the dictionary will within a few weeks, change your accent into a globally intelligible accent. Good luck, and thank you.