



**IIT Madras**  
ONLINE DEGREE

# **WORD STRESS - 1**

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- In plays, films and theatres, artistes produce sounds in any manner.
- But in natural languages, no two sounds are produced equally loud or long.
- No two syllables are produced equally loud or long; one sound or one syllable is more prominent than others.
- This is true of all languages.

- In English, difference between prominent syllable and other syllables in a word is much greater than it is in other languages
- Listen to the following sound clip:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/16UFBV\\_MZJNvtDz7fqry30cBR4s\\_MuRwH/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/16UFBV_MZJNvtDz7fqry30cBR4s_MuRwH/view?usp=sharing)

Theresa May, is a British Politician who served as Prime Minister of the UK from 2016 to 2019.

# ACTIVITY

- Can you say which syllables in longer words are stressed in the clip cited in the previous slide.
- Compare with the list here. If you think other syllables have main stress than the ones marked above, then listen to the audio-clip once again.

# TRANSCRIPT

- Former Prime Minister Theresa May's message to mark Diwali. "I am delighted to send my very best wishes to everyone celebrating Diwali, a festival which holds such significance for so many people. Indeed, right across the world, lights decorate the streets, flowers adorn homes, treats are served and presents exchanged – all marking the triumph of light over darkness. But the festival of lights isn't just relevant for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists. It is relevant to all of us, those of all faiths and none."

# ANSWERS

de'lighted	'everyone	'celebrating
Di'wali	'festival	sig'nificance
'many	'people	In'deed
a'cross	'decorate	'flowers
a'dorn	'presents	ex'changed
'marking	'triumph	'over
'darkness	'Hindus	'Buddhists
'relevant		

- The most prominent syllable in a word is also generally called stressed syllable.
- Stressed syllable is much louder, or longer or more prominent than others. And this difference is more easily seen in English than in other languages.



- In the following words, the second syllable is more prominent than the first:

about	acquit	adopt	afraid
again	allow	beyond	between
beneath	beside	below	before

- Similarly the following words have stress on the first syllable

actor	artist	after	barber
certain	basket	doctor	father
garden	hostel	market	

- On words longer than one syllable, all English dictionaries show syllable with main or prominent stress.
- But different dictionaries do it in different manners. In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* a stressed syllable is preceded by a single inverted comma. So stress is shown as follows:

‘actor	a’bout	‘competence
com’ponent	eco’nomic	e’conomy

- In some other dictionaries, stressed vowel is underlined, such as in the following words:

<u>a</u> ctor	ab <u>ou</u> t	co <u>m</u> petence
compo <u>n</u> ent	econo <u>m</u> ic	econo <u>m</u> omy

- In another dictionary, stressed vowel is highlighted, such as shown below.

<b>a</b> ctor	ab <b>o</b> ut	<b>c</b> ompetence
com <b>o</b> nent	eco <b>n</b> omic	eco <b>n</b> omy

- In some still others, a stressed syllable is shown through capitalized letter, such as follows:

ACtor	aBOUt	COMpetence
comPOnent	ecoNOmic	eCOnomy

# ACTIVITY

- Check how your dictionary shows stress in English words.
- Make a note also of any differences of pronunciation between the way you render this word and the way it is given in the dictionary.

# ACTIVITY

- Look up a dictionary and make a list of frequently used words that are stressed on the first syllable.
- Look up a dictionary and make another list of frequently used words that are stressed on the second syllable.
- **Check if you stress these words the way they are listed in dictionary.**



- It is so also in longer words. Look at the following words. See if you pronounce them right.

‘abdomen	ac’countant	‘advocate	af’fectionate
bene’ficial	di’vinity	e’liminate	fortifi’cation
‘finalize	‘government	‘governor	hospi’tality

‘industry	ju’dicial	la’boratory	ma’chinery
mountai’neer	natio’nality	‘orphanage	‘president
‘questionable	‘reasonable	scien’tific	termi’nation
um’brella	‘verify	‘womanhood	

- If your pronunciation differs from the indicated pronunciation of these words, then learn to pronounce them right.
- In the words given in the **Activity**:
  - Most words are stressed on the initial syllable
  - Some words are stressed on the second syllable
  - A few words are stressed on the third syllable from the beginning, and
  - Remaining words are stressed on other syllables.

Thank You