



IIT Madras

BSc Degree

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Stress in Words

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Words

- A single distinct meaningful element of speech or writing, used with others (or sometimes alone) to form a sentence and typically shown with a space on either side when written or printed.

Examples of words: bees, hair, matter, tall etc.

Syllables

- A **syllable** is a unit in a word.
- Syllables have nucleus (most often a vowel) with optional initial and final margins (typically, consonants).
- Words can have several syllables.
 - One syllable words
 - Two two syllable word,
 - Three syllable words,
 - Four syllable words

Syllables

- One word may have one or more syllables
- Words with one syllables
 - sun life, break, tongue
- Words with two syllables
 - tiger /tai-gar/ police /po-lis/
 - Between /bit-wiin/ marriage /maer-rij/

Syllables

- Examples of three syllable words :

energy /e-ner-jii/

heritage /he-ri-tez/

capital /kae-pi-tal/

suffering /saf-far-ing/

- Examples of four syllable words:

Invisible /in-vi-si-ble/

aquarium /a-kwae-rii-am/

education /e-du-ke-shan/

infinity /in-fi-ni-tii/

Stress Patterns

Stress patterns in words are mostly unpredictable in English. However, some general rules can be applied to many words

- When a **noun or adjective** stems from a one-syllable word, (for example *break* and *friend*), the stress usually stays on the **syllable of the original word**.

Example: break – BREAKable, friend – FRIENDly

- With most of the **disyllabic nouns and adjectives**, stress is on the **first syllable**.

Examples: Nouns

PRE-sent

TI-ger

BREAK-fast

Adjectives

HAND-some

EA-sy,

HA-ppi

- With most **disyllabic verbs**, stress is on the **last syllable**.

Example: in-CREATE, be-GIN

- To differentiate between a **noun** and a **verb** with the same spelling, **stress position changes**.

Example:	a DEcrease (Noun)	to deCREASE (Verb)
	an OBject (Noun)	to obJECT (Verb)

- In **compound nouns** (two words merged into one) the stress is on the **first part**.

Example: BOOKshop, NOTEbook

- The words ending in **-TION**, **-SION** and **-CIAN** are usually stressed on the **second last syllable**.

Example: e-du-CA-tion, per-MIS-sion, phy- SI- cian

- Words ending with **-IC** are usually stressed on the **second last syllable**.

Example: rea-LIS-tic, stra-TE-gic

- Words ending with –ee or –oo are usually stressed on the last syllable. Example: gau- rent- EE, shamp-OO
- Note: When in doubt, do not stress. It is better to not stress than stress the wrong syllable.