

14 Help yourself

Pronunciation: word stress reference

Common patterns

There are no simple rules relating to word stress: it is important to learn the correct stress pattern for each new word you learn. Common patterns include:

o O

prefer **suggest** **benign** **contempt**

This pattern is especially common in two-syllable verbs.

O o

easy **station** **worker** **open**

This pattern is especially common in two-syllable adjectives and nouns.

o o O

volunteer **employee**

o O o

deposit **apartment**

O o o

difficult **operate**

o o O o

avaricious **information**

o O o o

exceptional **unbeatable**

Words which change meaning

Sometime words with the same spelling are pronounced with different word-stress patterns. Sometime the meaning is related.

Noun

O o

object

transfer

record

contrast

Verb

o O

object

transfer

record

contrast

Words stress and suffixes

Words which end in suffixes, such as *-tion* and *-ese*, often have predictable patterns of words stress.

-tion

End pattern: O o

organize

organization

nationalize

nationalization

-grapher, -graphy

End pattern: o O o o

photograph

photographer

telegraph

telegraphy

-ic, -ical

End patterns: O o or O o o

history

historic

philosophy

philosophical

-ese

End pattern: o O

China

Chinese

Japan

Japanese

-ity

End pattern: O o o

equal

equality

active

activity

Note, however, that some suffixes, such as *-ness*, have no effect on the stress of the root word:

O o O o o

happy

happiness

Stress shift in sentences

For some words, where stress is placed depends on their position in a sentence. When the words is spoken alone or at the end of a statement, the stress occurs near the end. When the word occurs before another word in a sentence, the stress occurs earlier.

Over half the students were **Japanese**.

Many people prefer **Japanese** cars.

In some cultures people sleep in the **afternoon**.

An **afternoon** meeting may be less productive than a morning one.