

English Pronunciation – Syllable Stress

For English learners, pronunciation can be difficult, because there are no accents to help us (for example: é, ô, à, ão). There are some rules to help us pronounce some English words, but generally, you need to remember how to say EVERY word individually.

1. a) Compound nouns (nouns made from two words):

Compound nouns always have the stress on the **first** part:

Examples:

<u>note</u> book	<u>boy</u> friend	<u>cheese</u> burger	<u>show</u> room	<u>tooth</u> paste
<u>basket</u> ball	<u>shopping</u> mall	<u>swimming</u> pool	<u>chewing</u> gum	<u>humming</u> bird

1. b) Compound adjectives and verbs:

Compound adjectives and verbs have the stress on the **second** part:

Examples: Adjectives: wholehearted green-fingered old-fashioned
Verbs: to understand to inform to overtake

2. Words ending with -tion, -sion, -cian, -tic, -lic, -fic, -scent:

The stress is always on the **penultimate** syllable.

Examples: solution explanation organization nation
 mansion decision television collision
 musician politician magician
 fantastic energetic optimistic pessimistic
 public alcoholic colic relic
 scientific horrific terrific
 adolescent fluorescent crescent

3. With suffixes, the stress often changes:

Examples: photograph photographer photography photographic
 politics political politician
 <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/-K38OfFKxds> (1 min)
 history historical declare declaration
 electric electricity courage courageous
 resident residential industry industrial

4. Adding a prefix:

When adding a prefix to a word, the stressed syllable usually doesn't change.

Examples: grateful ungrateful
 responsible irresponsible
 important unimportant
 vulnerable invulnerable

5) Sometimes the stressed syllable is different between English versions.

Examples: USA UK
 detail detail
 controversy controversy
 adversary adversary
 advertisement advertisement
 garage garage

Syllable Stress Position

Oxytone is a linguistic term for a word which has the stress on the **last** syllable.

e.g. foreget, incorrect, direct, delay

Paroxytone – a word which has the stress on the **penultimate** syllable.

e.g. happy, creative, banana, photographic, politician

Proparoxytone – a word which has the stress on the **ante-penultimate** syllable.

e.g. cinema, visited, operational, photographer, summary, catalog, embarrasment

There are many words in the English language which have the stress on the **fourth-to-last** syllable (**Pro-proparoxytone**). This doesn't happen in Brazilian Portuguese and so can cause pronunciation problems for Brazilians. Some examples are:

Four syllables: accuracy admirable category confidently definitely
 delicacy dictionary difficulty eligible favorable
 fortunately literature obviously ordinary physically
 personalize secretary separately

Five syllables: considerable deliberately dramatically emotionally
 imaginary inevitable itinery laboratory
 occasionally significantly sophisticated unfortunately
 vocabulary

Six syllables: economically simultaneously

There are also some words which have the stress on the **fifth-to-last** syllable (**Pro-proparoxytone**), but they are rare.

For example: favoritism, regulatory, personalizing

More information: <https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/word-stress-rules.htm>

Quiz: <https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/word-stress-quiz.php>