## STRESS PLACEMENT IN COMPLEX WORDS:

## Stress in pre-fixes & neutral suffixes

**Introduction**

Up to this point, we have considered stress placement in simple words consisting of a single stem. In the following courses, we shall examine the stress placement in complex words, which comprises of a prefix + stem + one or more suffixes.

### I. Stress assignment on prefixes:

In the words containing prefixes such as: (**a-, ab-, an-, co-, de-, dis-, im-, in-, re-, un-**), the primary stress mostly doesn't fall on the prefix but on one of the stem syllables.

| Prefixes | Examples |
|---|---|
| **a-** | Aside /əˈsaɪd/, Aback /əˈbæk/ |
| **ab-** | Abnormal /æbˈnɔːməl/, Absolve /əbˈzɒlv / |
| **an-** | Anachronism /əˈnækrənɪzm̩ /, Anomaly /əˈnɒməli/ |
| **co-** | Cooperative /kəʊˈprətɪv/, Cohabit /kəʊˈhæbɪt/, coexist /ˌkəʊɪgˈzɪst/, Coordinate /kəʊˈɔːdɪneɪt/ |
| **de-** | Demotivate /ˌdiːˈməʊtɪveɪt/, Decode /diːˈkəʊd/ |
| **dis-** | Dislike /dɪsˈlaɪk/, Disagree /ˌdɪsəˈgriː/, Dispatch /dɪˈspætʃ/, Disable /dɪsˈeɪbl/ |
| **im-** | Impossible /ɪmˈpɒsəbl/, Immortal /ɪˈmɔːtl/, Imprison /ɪmˈprɪzn/, Imbalance /ɪmˈbæləns/ |
| **in-** | Intoxicate /ɪnˈtɒksɪkeɪt/, Invaluable /ɪnˈvæljuəbl/, Incorrect /ˌɪnkəˈrekt/ |
| **re-** | Resource /rɪˈsɔːs/, Reorder /ˌriːˈɔːdə(r)/, Rearrange /ˌriːəˈreɪndʒ/ |
| **un-** | Uncertain /ʌnˈsɜːtn/, Unfaithful /ʌnˈfeɪθfl/, Unable /ʌnˈeɪbl/ |

There are many exceptions in English because of the vastness of the language. Thus, stress placement in complex words is not always predictable; however, the rules do work mostly.

**E.g.** Impotent /ˈɪmpətənt/, impulse /ˈɪmpʌls/, impudent /ˈɪmpjədənt/, infinite /ˈɪnfɪnət/, insolent /ˈɪnsələnt/.

### II. Stress in suffix words:

Unlike prefixes, it is possible for a suffix to change the original pronunciation –stress placement- of the word stem when they are affixed. This depends on whether the suffix is stress-neutral, stress-attracting or pre-stressed (stress shifting).

**2.1. Stress-neutral suffixes:**

Stress-neutral (stress-fixing) suffixes don't change the pronunciation of the word stem and do not influence stress placement: (-**able, -age, -ance, -ence, -ant, -dom, -ed, -er, -ern, -ful, -hood, -ing, -ish (adj), -ism, -ist, less, -like, -ly, -man, -ment, -ness, -or, -s, -ship, -some, -wards, -wise**).

| Stress-fixing suffix | Examples |
|---|---|
| -able/ -ible (adj) | Considerable /kənˈsɪdrəbl̩/, Unavoidable /ʌnəˈvɔɪdəbl̩/, Visible/ˈvɪzɪbl̩/ |
| -age (adj) | Percentage /pəˈsentɪdʒ/, Marriage /ˈmærɪdʒ/, Passage /ˈpæsɪdʒ/ |
| -ance/ -ence (n) | Admittance /ədˈmɪtns/, Consistence /kənˈsɪstəns/, Dependence /dɪˈpendəns/ |
| -ant/ -ent (n) | Reluctant /rɪˈlʌktənt/, Commandment /kəˈmɑːndmənt/ |
| -dom (n) | Martyrdom /ˈmɑːtədəm/, Wisdom /ˈwɪzdəm/, Kingdom /ˈkɪŋdəm/ |
| -ern (adj) | Western /ˈwestn̩/, Eastern / ˈiːstən /, Northern /ˈnɔːðən/, Southern /ˈsʌðən/ |

| | |
|---|---|
| -ed (v) | Adapted /əˈdæptɪd/, Reasoned /ˈriːzn̩d/, Condemned /kənˈdemd/ |
| -er / -ar (n) | Interpreter /ɪnˈtɜːprɪtə/, Commander /kəˈmɑːndə/, Scholar /ˈskɒlə/ |
| -ful (adj) | Sorrowful /ˈsɒrəʊfʊl/, Beautiful /ˈbjuːtɪfl̩/, Merciful /ˈmɜːsɪfl̩/ |
| -hood (n) | Brotherhood /ˈbrʌðəhʊd/, Adulthood /ˈædʌlthʊd/, Neighborhood /ˈneɪbəhʊd/ |
| -ing (gerund) | Educating /ˈedʒukeɪtɪŋ/, Interesting /ˈɪntr̩estɪŋ/, Consisting /kənˈsɪstɪŋ/ |
| -ism (n) | Alcoholism /ˈælkəhɒlɪzm̩/, Communism /ˈkɒmjʊnɪzm̩/ |
| -ish (adj) | Childish /ˈtʃaɪldɪʃ/, Swedish /ˈswiːdɪʃ/ |
| -ist (adj) | Journalist /ˈdʒɜːnəlɪst/, Physicist /ˈfɪzɪsɪst/, Specialist /ˈspeʃəlɪst/ |
| -less (adj) | Bottomless /ˈbɒtəmləs/, Defenseless /dɪˈfensləs/, Penniless /ˈpenɪləs / |
| -like (adj) | Autumn-like /ˈɔːtəmlaɪk/, Businesslike /ˈbɪznɪslaɪk/, Native-like /ˈneɪtɪvlaɪk/ |
| -ly (adv) | Carelessly /ˈkeələsli/, Apparently /əˈpærəntli/, Rapidly /ˈræpɪdli/ |
| -man (n) | Policeman /pəˈliːsmən/, Fireman /ˈfaɪəmən/, Businessman /ˈbɪznɪsmən/ |
| -ment (n) | Development /dɪˈveləpmənt/, Accompaniment /əˈkʌmpənɪmənt/ |
| -ness (n) | Tenderness /ˈtendənəs/, Greatness /ˈɡreɪtnəs/, Quietness /ˈkwaɪətnəs/ |
| -or (n) | Director /dɪˈ-, daɪˈrektə /, Survivor / səˈvaɪvə/, Instructor /ɪnˈstrʌktə/ |
| -s (n/v) | Images /ˈɪmɪdʒɪz/, Advances /ədˈvɑːnsɪz/, Forests /ˈfɒrɪsts/, Damns /ˈdæmz/ |
| -ship (n) | Censorship /ˈsensəʃɪp/, Dictatorship /dɪkˈteɪtəʃɪp/, Sponsorship /ˈspɒnsəʃɪp/ |
| -some (adj) | Adventuresome /ədˈventʃəsəm/, Quarrelsome /ˈkwɒrl̩səm/, Venturesome /ˈventʃəəsəəm/ |
| -ward(s) (adj, adv) | Backward /ˈbækwəd/, Southwards /ˈsaʊθwədz/, Forward /ˈfɔːwəd/ |
| -wise (adj) | Otherwise /ˈʌðəwaɪz/, Cornerwise /ˈkɔːnəwaɪz/, Clockwise /ˈklɒkwaɪz/ |

***Exceptions***: admirable /ˈædmərəbl/, advertisement /ədˈvɜːtɪsmənt/, Catholicism /kəˈθɒləsɪzəm/, conference /ˈkɒnfərəns/, difference /ˈdɪfrəns/, excellent /ˈeksələnt/, ignorant /ˈɪɡnərənt/, reference /ˈrefrəns/, preferable /ˈprefrəbl/, resident /ˈrezɪdənt/.

**Practice**

**Exercise 1:**

Mark the stress in the following complex words:

| Word | Transcription | Word | Transcription |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Consider<u>able</u> | /kənˈsɪdərəbl/ | 14. Fright<u>ful</u> | /ˈfraɪtfəl/ |
| 2. Comfort<u>able</u> | /ˈkʌmftəbl/ | 15. Father<u>hood</u> | /ˈfɑːðəhʊd/ |
| 3. Orphan<u>age</u> | /ˈɔːfənɪdʒ/ | 16. Preparing | /prɪˈpeərɪŋ/ |
| 4. Assist<u>ance</u> | /əˈsɪstəns/ | 17. Eleventh | /ɪˈlevnθ/ |
| 5. Allow<u>ance</u> | /əˈlaʊəns/ | 18. Happi<u>ly</u> | /ˈhæpɪli/ |
| 6. Defi<u>ance</u> | /dɪˈfaɪəns/ | 19. Fearless<u>ly</u> | /ˈfɪələsli/ |
| 7. Demonstrat<u>ed</u> | /ˈdemənstreɪtɪd/ | 20. Clari<u>ty</u> | /ˈklærɪti/ |
| 8. Serv<u>ant</u> | /ˈsɜːvənt/ | 21. Gentle<u>man</u> | /ˈdʒentlmən/ |
| 9. Free<u>dom</u> | /ˈfriːdəm/ | 22. After<u>wards</u> | /ˈɑːftəwədz/ |
| 10. Differ<u>ence</u> | /ˈdɪfrəns/ | 23. Instruct<u>or</u> | /ɪnˈstrʌktə/ |
| 11. Believ<u>er</u> | /bɪˈliːvə/ | 24. Trouble<u>some</u> | /ˈtrʌblsəm/ |
| 12. North<u>ern</u> | /ˈnɔːðən/ | 25. Other<u>wise</u> | /ˈʌðəwaɪz/ |
| 13. South<u>ern</u> | /ˈsʌðən/ | 26. Research | /rɪˈsɜːtʃ/ |