

Exercise 1-13: Variable Stress**CD 1 Track 20**

Notice how the meaning of the following sentence changes each time we change the stress pattern. You should be starting to feel in control of your sentences now.

1. *What would you like ?*

This is the most common version of the sentence, and it is just a simple request for information.

2. *What would you like?*

This is to single out an individual from a group.

3. *What would you like?*

You've been discussing the kinds of things he might like and you want to determine his specific desires: "*Now that you mention it, what would you like?*"

or

He has rejected several things and a little exasperated, you ask, "*If you don't want any of these, what would you like?*"

4. *What would you like?*

You didn't hear and you would like the speaker to repeat herself.

or

You can't believe what you heard: "*I'd like strawberry jam on my asparagus.*"
— "*What would you like ?*"

+ Turn off the CD and repeat the four sentences.

Exercise 1 -14: Make a Variable Stress Sentence**CD 1 Track 21**

Now you decide which words should be emphasized. Write a normal, everyday sentence with at least seven words and put it through as many changes as possible. Try to make a pitch change for each word in the sentence and think about how it changes the meaning of the entire sentence.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

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Application of Intonation**CD 1 Track 22**

There is always at least one stressed word in a sentence and frequently you can have quite a few if you are introducing a lot of new information or if you want to contrast several things. Look at the paragraph in Exercise 1-15. Take a pencil and mark every word that you think should be stressed or sound stronger than the words around it. I'd like you to make just an accent mark (´) to indicate a word you think should sound stronger than others around it.

Reminder The three ways to change your voice for intonation are: (1) **Volume** (speak louder), (2) **Length** (stretch out a word), and (3) **Pitch** (change your tone).

* Pause the CD and work on the paragraph below.

Exercise 1 -15: Application of Stress**CD 1 Track 23**

Mark every word or syllable with ' where you think that the sound is stressed. Use the first sentence as your example. Check Answer Key, beginning on page 193. Pause the CD.

Hello, my' name is _____. I'm taking American Accent Training. There's a lot to learn, but I hope to make it as enjoyable as possible. I should pick up on the American intonation pattern pretty easily, although the only way to get it is to practice all of the time. I use the up and down, or peaks and valleys, intonation more than I used to. I've been paying attention to pitch, too. It's like walking down a staircase. I've been talking to a lot of Americans lately, and they tell me that I'm easier to understand. Anyway, I could go on and on, but the important thing is to listen well and sound good. Well, what do you think? Do I?

V Listen and re-mark the stressed words with your marker. After you've put in the accent marks where you think they belong, take one of the colored translucent markers and as I read very slowly, mark the words that I stress. I am going to exaggerate the words far more than you'd normally hear in a normal reading of the paragraph. You can mark either the whole word or just the strong syllable, whichever you prefer, so that you have a bright spot of color for where the stress should fall.

Note *If you do the exercise only in pencil, your eye and mind will tend to skip over the accent marks. The spots of color, however, will register as "different" and thereby encourage your pitch change. This may strike you as unusual, but trust me, it works.*

* Pause the CD and practice reading the paragraph out loud three times on your own.

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How You Talk Indicates to People How You Are

CD 1 Track 24

Beware of "Revealing" a Personality that You Don't Have!

There is no absolute right or wrong in regard to intonation because a case can be made for stressing just about any word or syllable, but you actually reveal a lot about yourself by the elements you choose to emphasize. For example, if you say, *Hello*, this intonation would indicate doubt. This is why you say, *Hello ?* when answering the telephone because you don't know who is on the other end. Or when you go into a house and you don't know who's there because you don't see anyone. But if you're giving a speech or making a presentation and you stand up in front of a crowd and say, *Hello*, the people would probably laugh because it sounds so uncertain. This is where you'd confidently want to say *Hello, my name is So-and-so*.

A second example is, *my name is*—as opposed to *my name is*. If you stress *name*, it sounds as if you are going to continue with more personal information: *My name is So-and-so, my address is such-and-such, my blood type is O*. Since it may not be your intention to give all that information, stay with the standard—*Hello, my name is So-and-so*.

If you stress / every time, it will seem that you have a very high opinion of yourself. Try it: *I'm taking American Accent Training. I've been paying attention to pitch, too. I think I'm quite wonderful*.

An earnest, hard-working person might emphasize words this way: *I'm taking American Accent Training* (Can I learn this stuff?). *I hope to make it as enjoyable as possible* (I'll force myself to enjoy it if I have to). *Although the only way to get it is to practice all the time* (24 hours a day).

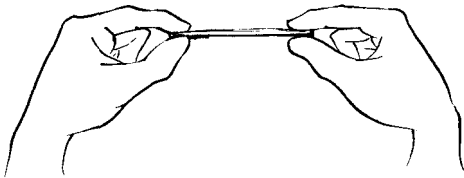
A Doubting Thomas would show up with: *I should pick up on* (but I might not) *the American intonation pattern pretty easily*, (but it looks pretty hard, too). *I've been talking to a lot of Americans lately, and they tell me that I'm easier to understand* (but I think they're just being polite).

Exercise 1-16: Paragraph Intonation Practice

CD 1 Track 25

V From your color-marked copy, read each sentence of the paragraph in Exercise 1-15 after me. Use your rubber band, give a clear pitch change to the highlighted words, and think about the meaning that the pitch is conveying.

- × Back up the CD and practice this paragraph three times.
- × Pause the CD and practice three times on your own.

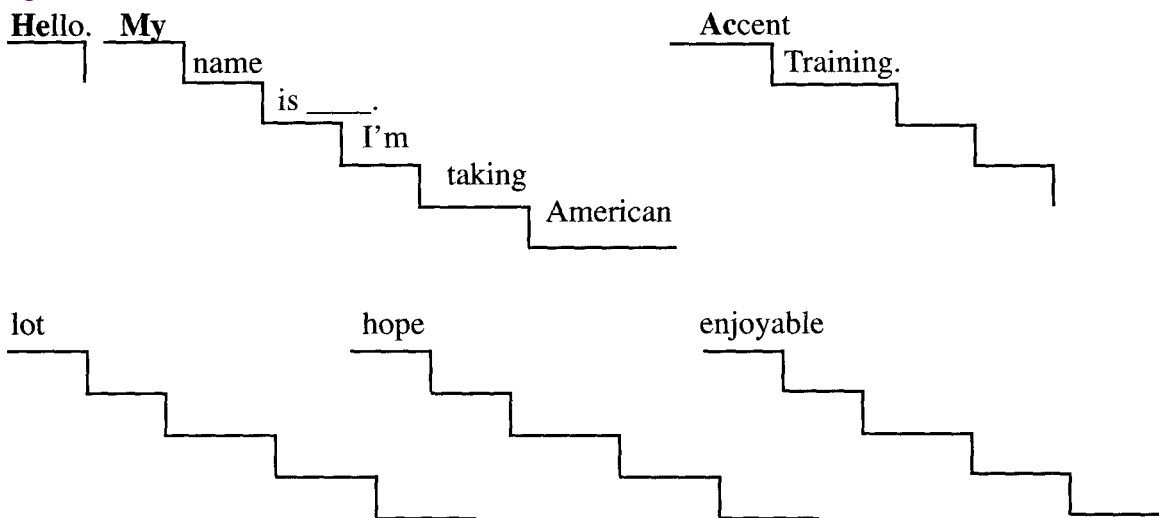


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Exercise 1-17: Staircase Intonation Practice

CD 1 Track 26

Draw one step of the staircase for each word of the paragraph. Start a new staircase for every stressed word. There usually is more than one staircase in a sentence. New sentences don't have to start new staircases; they can continue from the previous sentence until you come to a stressed word. I'll read the beginning sentences. Check the first sentence against the example. Then put the words of the second sentence on a staircase, based on the way I read it. Remember, I'm exaggerating to make a point.



✓ Write out the rest of the staircases.

× Turn the CD back on to check your staircases with the way I read the paragraph. × Pause the CD again to check your staircases in the Answer Key, beginning on page 193. × Back up the CD, and listen and repeat my reading of the paragraph while following the staircases in the Answer Key.

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Exercise 1-18: Reading with Staircase Intonation Track 27

CD 1

Read the following with clear intonation where marked.

Hello, my name is _____. I'm taking American **Accent** Training. There's a **lot** to learn, but I **hope** to make it as **enjoyable** as possible. I should pick **up** on the American **intonation** pattern pretty **easily**, although the **only** way to **get** it **is** to **practice** all of the time. I use the **up** and down, or **peaks** and valleys, **intonation** more than I **used** to. I've been paying attention to **pitch**, **too**. It's like **walking** down a **staircase**. I've been **talking** to a lot of **Americans** lately, and they tell me that I'm **easier** to understand. **Anyway**, I could go **on** and on, but the **important** thing is to **listen** well and sound **good**. Well, what do you **think**? **Do** I?

Exercise 1-19: Spelling and Numbers Track 28

CD 1

Just as there is stress in words or phrases, there is intonation in spelling and numbers. Americans seem to spell things out much more than other people. In any bureaucratic situation, you'll be asked to spell names and give all kinds of numbers—your phone number, your birth date, and so on. There is a distinct stress and rhythm pattern to both spelling and numbers—usually in groups of three or four letters or numbers, with the stress falling on the last member of the group. Acronyms (phrases

that are represented by the first letter of each word) and initials are usually stressed on the last letter. Just listen to the words as I say them, then repeat the spelling after me.

Acronym Pronunciation

| | |
|--------|------------------------|
| IBM | Eye Bee Em |
| MIT | Em Eye Tee |
| Ph.D. | Pee Aitch Dee |
| MBA | Em Bee ɛi |
| LA | Eh Lay |
| IQ | Eye Kyu |
| RSVP | Are Ess Vee Pee |
| TV | Tee Vee |
| USA | You Ess ɛi |
| ASAP | ɛi Ess ɛi Pee |
| CIA | See Eye ɛi |
| FBI | Eff Bee Eye |
| USMC | You Ess Em See |
| COD | See Oh Dee |
| SOS | Ess Oh Ess |
| X,Y, Z | Ex, Why, Zee |

Spelling Pronunciation

| | |
|--------|--|
| Box | Bee Oh Ex |
| Cook | See Oh Oh Kay |
| Wilson | Dubba You Eye El , Ess Oh En |

Numbers Pronunciation

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Area Code | 21 3 |
| Zip Code | 9470 8 |
| Date | 9/6/6 2 |
| Phone Number | 555-91 32 |

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Exercise 1-20; Sound/Meaning Shifts CD 1 Track 29

Intonation is powerful. It can change meaning and pronunciation. Here you will get the chance to play with the sounds. Remember, in the beginning, the meaning isn't that important—just work on getting control of your pitch changes. Use your rubber band for each stressed word.

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| my tie | mai -tai | Might I? |
| my keys | Mikey 's | My keys ? |
| inn key | in key | inky |
| my tea | mighty | My D |
| I have two . | I have, too . | I have to. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| How many kids do you have? | I have two . |
| I've been to Europe . | I have, too . |
| Why do you work so hard? | I have to. |

Exercise 1-21: Squeezed-Out Syllables CD 1 Track 30

Intonation can also completely get rid of certain entire syllables. Some longer words that are stressed on the first syllable squeeze weak syllables right out. Cover up the regular columns and read the words between the brackets.

| | | | |
|----------|----------------------|-------|---------|
| actually | [æ k •chully] | every | [ɛvree] |
|----------|----------------------|-------|---------|

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| average | [ævr'j] | family | [fæmlee] |
| aspirin | [æsprin] | finally | [fyn•lee] |
| broccoli | [bräklee] | general | [jɛnr'l] |
| business | [bizness] | groceries | [grossreez] |
| camera | [kæmruh] | interest | [intr'st] |
| chocolate | [chäkl't] | jewelry | [joolree] |
| comfortable | [k'mf•t'bl] | mathematics | [mæthmædix] |
| corporal | [corpr'l] | memory | [mɛmree] |
| desperate | [dɛspr't] | orange | [ornj] |
| diamond | [däim'nd] | probably | [präblee] |
| diaper | [däiper] | restaurant | [rɛstränt] |
| different | [diff'rnt] | separate | [sɛpr't] |
| emerald | [ɛmr'ld] | several | [sɛvr'l] |
| vegetable | [vej•t'bl] | liberal | [libr'l] |
| beverage | [bev•r'j] | conference | [cänfrns] |
| bakery | [bä•kree] | coverage | [c'vr'j] |
| catholic | [cæth•l'k] | history | [hisstree] |
| nursery | [nrsree] | accidentally | [æk•sə•dent•lee] |
| onion | [ɔny'n] | basically | [bä•sə•klee] |

Note *The ~cally ending is always pronounced ~klee.*

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Syllable Stress CD 1 Track 31

Syllable Count Intonation Patterns

In spoken English, if you stress the wrong syllable, you can totally lose the meaning of a word: "MA-sheen" is hardly recognizable as "ma-SHEEN" or *machine*.

At this point, we won't be concerned with *why* we are stressing a particular syllable— that understanding will come later.

Exercise 1-22: Syllable Patterns

CD 1 Track 32

In order to practice accurate pitch change, repeat the following column. Each syllable will count as one musical note. Remember that words that end in a vowel or a voiced consonant will be longer than ones ending in an unvoiced consonant.

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 1 Syllable | A | B | C |
| Pattern 1a | la! | get | stop |

**Pattern 1b**

cat
jump
box
la-a

quick
choice
loss
law

which
bit
beat
bid

**2 Syllables****Pattern 2a**

dog
see
plan

goes
choose
lose

bead
car
know

**Pattern 2b**

la-la
a dog
a cat
destroy
a pen
pretend
your job
pea soup

Bob Smith
my car
some more
red tape
enclose
consume
my choice
How's work?

for you
Who knows?
cassette
ballet
valet
to do
today
tonight



la-la
hot dog
icy
suitcase
project
sunset
Get one!
Do it!

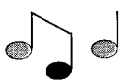
wristwatch
textbook
bookshelf
sunshine
placemat
stapler
modern
modem

phone book
doorknob
notebook
house key
ballot
valid
dog show
want ad

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a hot dog is an overheated canine

a hot dog is a frankfurter

Exercise 1-22: Syllable Patterns *continued***CD 1 Track 32****3 Syllables****Pattern 3a**

A
la-la-la
Bob's hot dog
Bob won't know.
Sam's the boss.
Susie's nice.
Bill went home.

B
Worms eat dirt.
Inchworms inch.
Pets need care.
Ed's too late.
Paul threw up.
Wool can itch.

C
Joe has three.
Bob has eight.
Al jumped up.
Glen sat down.
Tom made lunch.
Kids should play.

Pattern 3b



Cats don't **care**.
Stocks can **fall**.
School is **fun**.

la-la-la

a hot **dog**
 I don't **know**.
 He's the **boss**.
 We cleaned **up**.
 in the **bag**
 for a **while**
 I went **home**.
 We don't **care**.

It's in **March**.

Pattern 3c



la-la-la

a **hot** dog
 I **don't** know!
 Jim **killed** it.
tomorrow
 a **fruitcake**
 the **engine**
 a **wineglass**
 potato
 whatever

Pattern 3d



la-la-la

hot dog stand
 I don't know.
analyze
article
dinnertime
digital
analog
 cell structure

Birds sing **songs**.
Spot has **fleas**.
Nick's a **punk**.

Make a **cake**.

He forgot.
 Take a **bath**.
 We're too **late**.
 I love **you**.
 over **here**
 What a **jerk!**
 How's your **job?**
 How'd it **go?**

Who'd you **meet?**

percentage (%)

advantage
 It's **starting**.
 Let's **try** it.
financial
 I **thought** so.
 on **Wednesday**
 in **April**
 I **love** you.
 Let's **tell** him.

alphabet

possible
Show me one.
 area
punctuate
emphasis
syllable
PostIt note
Rolodex

Mom said, "**No!**"
Mars is **red**.
Ned sells **cars**.

IBM

a good **time**
 Use your **head!**
 How are **you?**
 We came **home**.
 on the **bus**
engineer
 She fell **down**.
 They called
back.
 You goofed **up**.

Ohio

his **football**
 They're **leaving**.
 How **are** you?
emphatic
 Dale **planned** it.
 You **took** it.
 external
 a **bargain**
 Don't **touch** it.

phone number

think about
comfortable
waiting for
pitiful
everything
orchestra
ignorant
Rubbermaid

4 Syllables Pattern 4a



A

la-la-la-la
Spot's a hot **dog**.
Jim killed a **snake**.
Joe doesn't **know**.
Nate bought a **book**.
Al brought some **ice**.

B

Nate needs a **break**.
Ed took my **car**.
Jill ate a **steak**.
Spain's really **far**.
Jake's in the **lake**.
Sam's in a **bar**.

C

Max wants to **know**.
Al's kitchen **floor**
Bill's halfway **there**.
Roses are **red**,
Violets are **blue**,
Candy is **sweet**,
and so are you.

Pattern 4b



la-la-la-la
 It's a hot **dog**.
 He killed a **snake**.
 He doesn't **know**.
 We came back **in**.
 He bought a **book**.

She asked for **help**.
 We took my **car**.
 We need a **break**.
 It's really **far**.
 I love you, **too**.
 They got **away**.

I want to **know**.
 the kitchen **floor**
 We watched **TV**.
 She's halfway **there**.
 We played all **day**.
 Please show me **how**.

Pattern 4c



la-la-la-la
Bob likes **hot** dogs.
Ann eats **pancakes**.
Cats eat **fish** bones.
Bears are **fuzzy**.
Planets **rotate**.

Boys ring **doorbells**.
Bill ate **breakfast**.
Guns are **lethal**.
Inchworms **bug** me.
Ragtops **cost** more.
Salesmen **sell** things.

Phil knows **mailmen**.
Joe grew **eggplants**.
Humpty Dumpty
Hawks are **vicious**.
Homework **bore**s them.
Mike can **hear** you.

Pattern 4d



la-la-la-la
 It's my **hot** dog.
 imitation
 analytic
 We like **science**.
 my to-**do** list

an **alarm** clock
 I don't **need** one.
 Ring the **doorbell**.
 What's the **matter**?
 introduction
 my **report** card

He said "**lightbulb**."
 What does '**box**' mean?
 Put your **hands** up.
 Where's the **mailman**?
 an assembly
 definition

Pattern 4e



la-la-la-la
 a **hot** dog stand
 Jim **killed** a man.
 analysis
 invisible
 a **platypus**

potato chip
 Whose **turn** is it?
 We **worked** on it.
 How **tall** are you?
 insanity
 ability

What **time** is it?
 my **phone** number
 Let's **eat** something.
 How **old** are you?
 un**touchable**
 a **maniac**

Pattern 4f



la-la-la-la
permanently
demonstrated
category
office supplies
educator

supervisor
window cleaner
race car driver
January (jæn-yə-wery)
progress report
thingamajig

lighthouse keeper
cough medicine
business meeting
February (feb-yə-wery)
baby-sitter
dictionary

Exercise 1-23; Syllable Count Test

CD 1 Track 33

Put the following words into the proper category based on the syllable count intonation. Write the pattern number in the space provided. Check Answer Key, beginning on p. 193.

Single Words

1. stop ___ 5. analyze (v) ___ 9. believe ___

- | | | | | | |
|----------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|----------------|-----|
| 2. go | ___ | 6. analysis (<i>n</i>) | ___ | 10. director | ___ |
| 3. sympathy | ___ | 7. analytic (<i>adj</i>) | ___ | 11. indicator | ___ |
| 4. sympathetic | ___ | 8. mistake | ___ | 12. technology | ___ |

Noun Phrases

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| 1. tech support | ___ | 5. English test | ___ | 9. a fire engine | ___ |
| 2. software program | ___ | 6. airline pilot | ___ | 10. sports fanatic | ___ |
| 3. the truth | ___ | 7. Y2K | ___ | 11. the kitchen floor | ___ |
| 4. notebook | ___ | 8. Santa Claus | ___ | 12. computer disk | ___ |

Phrases

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
| 1. on the table | ___ | 5. for sure | ___ | 9. on the way | ___ |
| 2. in your dreams | ___ | 6. OK | ___ | 10. like a princess | ___ |
| 3. last Monday | ___ | 7. thank you | ___ | 11. to pick up | ___ |
| 4. for a while | ___ | 8. back to back | ___ | 12. a pickup | ___ |

Sentences

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| 1. All gets T-shirts. | ___ | 5. I don't know. | ___ | 9. She has head lice. | ___ |
| 2. I went too fast. | ___ | 6. Bob works hard. | ___ | 10. Gail has head lice. | ___ |
| 3. Get up! | ___ | 7. It's in the back. | ___ | 11. Sue's working hard. | ___ |
| 4. Get one! | ___ | 8. Buy us some! | ___ | 12. I want some more. | ___ |

Mixed

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| 1. Do it again. | ___ | 8. in the middle | ___ | 15. Make up your mind! | ___ |
| 2. Joe was upset. | ___ | 9. It's a good trick. | ___ | 16. Tom has frostbite. | ___ |
| 3. banana | ___ | 10. specifically | ___ | 17. Sam's a champ. | ___ |
| 4. banana split | ___ | 11. Bill needs it. | ___ | 18. He's a winner. | ___ |
| 5. categorize | ___ | 12. jump around | ___ | 19. He likes to win. | ___ |
| 6. child support | ___ | 13. on my own | ___ | 20. All hates pork chops. | ___ |
| 7. Mexican food | ___ | 14. by myself | ___ | 21. He likes ground beef. | ___ |

Make up your own examples, one of each pattern. Make up more on your own.

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----------|----|-----------|----|
| 1. _____ | 2a | 5. _____ | 3c | 9. _____ | 4c |
| 2. _____ | 2b | 6. _____ | 3d | 10. _____ | 4d |
| 3. _____ | 3a | 7. _____ | 4a | 11. _____ | 4e |
| 4. _____ | 3b | 8. _____ | 4b | 12. _____ | 4f |

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Complex Intonation

Word Count Intonation Patterns

CD 1 Track 34

This is the beginning of an extremely important part of spoken American English—the rhythms and intonation patterns of the long streams of nouns and adjectives that are so commonly used. These exercises will tie in the intonation patterns of **adjectives** (*nice, old, best, etc.*), **nouns** (*dog, house, surgeon, etc.*), and **adverbs** (*very, really, amazingly, etc.*)

One way of approaching sentence intonation is not to build each sentence from scratch. Instead, use patterns, with each pattern similar to a mathematical formula. Instead of plugging in numbers, however, plug in words.

In Exercise 1-2, we looked at simple noun•verb•noun patterns, and in Exercise 1-22 and 1-23, the syllable-count intonation patterns were covered and tested. In Exercises 1-24 to 1-37, we'll examine intonation patterns in two word phrases.

It's important to note that there's a major difference between *syllable stress* and *compound noun stress* patterns. In the syllable count exercises, each *syllable* was represented by a single musical note. In the noun phrases, each individual *word* will be represented by a single musical note—no matter how many total syllables there may be.

At times, what appears to be a single syllable word will have a "longer" sound to it—*seed* takes longer to say than *seat* for example. This was introduced on page 3, where you learned that a final voiced consonant causes the previous vowel to double.

Exercise 1-24: Single-Word Phrases

CD 1 Track 35

Repeat the following noun and adjective sentences.



Noun

1. It's a **nail**.
2. It's a **cake**.
3. It's a **tub**.
4. It's a **drive**.
5. It's a **door**.
6. It's a **cärd**.
7. It's a **spot**. [säpt]
8. It's a **book**, [bük]



Adjective

- It's **short**.
- It's **chocolate**. [chäkl't]
- It's **hot**. [hät]
- It's **härd**.
- It's in **back**. [bæk]
- There are **four**.
- It's **smäll**.
- It's **good**. [güd]

Write your own noun and adjective sentences below. You will be using these examples throughout this series of exercises.

9. It's a _____ It's _____
10. It's a _____ It's _____
11. It's a _____ It's _____

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Two-Word Phrases

Descriptive Phrases

CD Track 36

Nouns are "heavier" than adjectives; they carry the weight of the new information. An adjective and a noun combination is called a *descriptive phrase*, and in the absence of contrast or other secondary changes, the stress will always fall naturally on the noun. In the absence of a noun, you will stress the adjective, but as soon as a noun appears on the scene, it takes immediate precedence—and should be stressed.

Exercise 1-25: Sentence Stress with Descriptive Phrases Track 37

CD 1

Repeat the following phrases.



Adjective

1. It's **short**.
2. It's **chocolate**.
3. It's **good**.
4. It's **guarded**.
5. It's **wide**.
6. There're **four**.
7. It was **small**.
8. It's the **best**.



Noun and Adjective

- It's a short **nail**.
- It's a chocolate **cake**.
- It's a good **plan**.
- It's a guarded **gate**.
- It's a wide **river**.
- There're four **cards**.
- It was a small **spot**.
- It's the best **book**.

Pause the CD and write your own adjective and noun/adjective sentences. Use the same words from Ex. 1-24.

9. It's _____ It's a _____
 10. It's _____ It's a _____
 11. It's _____ It's a _____

Exercise 1 -26: Two Types of Descriptive Phrases Track 38

CD 1

Repeat.



Adjective Noun

- It's a short **nail**.
- It's a chocolate **cake**.
- It's a hot **bath**.
- It's a hard **drive**.



Adverb Adjective

- It's really **short**.
 It's dark **chocolate**.
 It's too **hot**.
 It's extremely **hard**.

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Exercise 1 -26: Two Types of Descriptive Phrases *continued* Track 38

CD1

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 5. It's the back door . | It's far back . |
| 6. There are four cards . | There are only four . |
| 7. It's a small spot . | It's laughably small . |
| 8. It's a good book . | It's amazingly good . |

Pause the CD and write your own adjective/noun and adverb/adjective sentences, carrying over Ex. 1-25.

9. It's a _____ It's _____
 10. It's a _____ It's _____
 11. It's a _____ It's _____

The following well-known story has been rewritten to contain only descriptions. Stress the second word of each phrase. Repeat after me.

Exercise 1-27: Descriptive Phrase Story—The Ugly Duckling CD1 Track 39

There is a *mother duck*. She lays *three eggs*. Soon, there are three *baby birds*. Two of the birds are *very beautiful*. One of them is *quite ugly*. The *beautiful ducklings* make fun of their *ugly brother*. The *poo r thing* is *very unhappy*. As the *three birds* grow older, the *ugly duckling* begins to change. His *gray feathers* turn *snowy white*. His *gangly neck* becomes *beautifully smooth*. In *early spring*, the *ugly duckling* is swimming in a *small pond* in the *backyard* of the *old farm*. He sees his *shimmering reflection* in the *clear water*. What a *great surprise*. He is no longer an *ugly duckling*. He has grown into a *lovely swan*.

Set Phrases

CD 1 Track 40

A Cultural Indoctrination to American Norms

When I learned the alphabet as a child, I heard it before I saw it. I heard that the last four letters were *dubba-you, ex, why, zee*. I thought that *dubbayou* was a long, strange name for a letter, but I didn't question it any more than I did *aitch*. It was just a name. Many years later, it struck me that it was a *double U*. Of course, a W is really UU. I had such a funny feeling, though, when I realized that something I had taken for granted for so many years had a background meaning that I had completely overlooked. This "funny feeling" is exactly what most native speakers get when

a two-word phrase is stressed on the wrong word. When two individual words go through the cultural process of becoming a set phrase, the original sense of each word is more or less forgotten and the new meaning completely takes over. When we hear the word *painkiller*, we think *anesthetic*. If, however, someone says *painkiller*, it brings up the strength and almost unrelated meaning of *kill*.

When you have a two-word phrase, you have to either stress on the first word, or on

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the second word. If you stress both or neither, it's not clear what you are trying to say. Stress on the first word is more noticeable and one of the most important concepts of intonation that you are going to study. At first glance, it doesn't seem significant, but the more you look at this concept, the more you are going to realize that it reflects how we Americans think, what concepts we have adopted as our own, and what things we consider important.

Set phrases are our "cultural icons," or word images; they are indicators of a *determined use* that we have internalized. These set phrases, with stress on the first word, have been taken into everyday English from descriptive phrases, with stress on the second word. As soon as a descriptive phrase becomes a set phrase, the emphasis shifts from the *second* word to the *first*. The original sense of each word is more or less forgotten and the new meaning takes over.

Set phrases indicate that we have internalized this phrase as an *image*, that we all agree on a concrete idea that this phrase represents. A hundred years or so ago, when Levi Strauss first came out with his denim pants, they were described as *blue jeans*. Now that we all agree on the image, however, they are *blue jeans*.

A more recent example would be the descriptive phrase, *He 's a real party animal*. This slang expression refers to someone who has a great time at a party. When it first became popular, the people using it needed to explain (with their intonation) that he was an *animal* at a *party*. As time passed, the expression became cliché and we changed the intonation to *He's a real party animal* because "everyone knew" what it meant.

Cliches are hard to recognize in a new language because what may be an old and tired expression to a native speaker may be fresh and exciting to a newcomer. One way to look at English from the inside out, rather than always looking from the outside in, is to get a feel for what Americans have already accepted and internalized. This starts out as a purely language phenomenon, but you will notice that as you progress and undergo the relentless cultural indoctrination of standard intonation patterns, you will find yourself expressing yourself with the language cues and signals that will mark you as an insider—not an outsider.

When the interpreter was translating for the former Russian President Gorbachev about his trip to San Francisco in 1990, his pronunciation was good, but he placed himself on the outside by repeatedly saying, *cable car*. The phrase *cable car* is an image, an established entity, and it was very noticeable to hear it stressed on the second word as a mere description.

An important point that I would like to make is that the "rules" you are given here are not meant to be memorized. This discussion is only an introduction to give you a starting point in understanding this phenomenon and in recognizing what to listen for. Read it over; think about it; then listen, try it out, listen some more, and try it out again.

As you become familiar with intonation, you will become more comfortable with American norms, thus the cultural orientation, or even cultural indoctrination, aspect of the following examples.

Note *When you get the impression that a two-word description could be hyphenated or even made into one word, it is a signal that it could be a set phrase—for example, **flash light**, **flash-light**, **flashlight**. Also, stress the first word with **Street (Main Street)** and nationalities of food and people (**Mexican food**, **Chinese girls**).*

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Exercise 1-28: Sentence Stress with Set Phrases

CD 1 Track

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Repeat the following sentences.

Noun

1. It's a **finger**.
2. It's a **pan**.
3. It's a **tub**.
4. It's a **drive**.
5. It's a **bone**.
6. It's a **card**.
7. It's a **spot**.
8. It's a **book**.

Noun/Adj.

- It's a **nail**.
- It's a **cake**.
- It's **hot**.
- It's **hard**.
- It's in **back**.
- It's a **trick**.
- It's a **light**.
- It's a **phone**.

Set Phrase






















- It's a **finger**nail.
- It's a **pan**cake.
- It's a **hot** tub. (*Jacuzzi*)
- It's a **hard** drive.
- It's the **back**bone. (*spine*)
- It's a **card** trick.
- It's a **spot**light.
- It's a **phone** book.

Pause the CD and write your own noun and set phrase sentences, carrying over the same nouns you used in Exercise 1-25. Remember, when you use a noun, include the article (a, an, the); when you use an adjective, you don't need an article.

9. It's a _____ It's a _____ It's a _____
10. It's a _____ It's a _____ It's a _____
11. It's a _____ It's a _____ It's a _____

Exercise 1-29: Making Set Phrases**CD 1 Track 42**

Pause the CD and add a noun to each word as indicated by the picture. Check Answer Key, beginning on page 193.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. a chair  +  <u>a chair man</u> | 11. a wrist  _____ |
| 2. a phone  _____ | 12. a beer  _____ |
| 3. a house  _____ | 13. a high  _____ |
| 4. a base  _____ | 14. a hunting  _____ |
| 5. a door  _____ | 15. a dump  _____ |
| 6. The White  _____ | 16. a jelly  _____ |
| 7. a movie  _____ | 17. a love  _____ |
| 8. The Bullet  _____ | 18. a thumb  _____ |
| 9. a race  _____ | 19. a lightning  _____ |
| 10. a coffee  _____ | 20. a pad  _____ |

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Exercise 1-30: Set Phrase Story—The Little Match Girl**CD 1****Track 43**

The following story contains only set phrases, as opposed to the descriptive story in Exercise 1-27. Stress the first word of each phrase.

The little **match girl** was out in a **snowstorm**. Her feet were like **ice cubes** and **her fingertips** had **frostbite**. She hadn't sold any matches since **daybreak**, and she had a **stomachache** from the **hunger pangs**, but her **stepmother** would beat her with a **broomstick** if she came home with an empty **coin purse**. Looking into the bright **living rooms**, she saw **Christmas trees** and warm **fireplaces**. Out on the **snowbank**, she lit match and saw the image of a grand **dinner table** of food before her. As the **matchstick** burned, the illusion slowly faded. She lit **another one** and saw a room full of happy **family members**. On the last match, her **grandmother** came down and carried her home. In the morning, the **passersby** saw the little **match girl**. She had frozen during the **nighttime**, but she had a smile on her face.

Contrasting a Description and a Set Phrase

We now have two main intonation patterns—*first word stress* and *second word stress*. In the following exercise, we will contrast the two.

Exercise 1-31: Contrasting Descriptive and Set Phrases 44

CD 1 Track

Repeat after me.



Descriptive Phrase

1. It's a short **nail**.
2. It's a chocolate **cake**.
3. It's a hot **bath**.
4. It's a long **drive**.
5. It's the back **door**.
6. There are four **cards**.
7. It's a small **spot**.
8. It's a good **book**.



Set Phrase

1. It's a **fingernail**.
2. It's a **pancake**.
3. It's a **hot tub**.
4. It's a **hard drive**.
5. It's the **backbone**.
6. It's a **card trick**.
7. It's a **spot light**.
8. It's a **phone book**.

Pause the CD and rewrite your descriptive phrases (Ex. 1-25) and set phrases (Ex. 1-28).

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|--------------|
| 9. | It's a _____ | It's a _____ |
| 10. | It's a _____ | It's a _____ |
| 11. | It's a _____ | It's a _____ |

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Exercise 1-32: Two-Word Stress 45

CD 1 Track

Repeat the following pairs.

Descriptive Phrase

Set Phrase

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|------------------------|
|  | a light bulb |  | a light bulb |
|  | blue pants |  | blue jeans |
|  | a cold fish |  | a gold fish |
|  | a gray hound |  | a grey hound |
|  | an old key |  | an inn key |
|  | a white house |  | The White House |
|  | a nice watch |  | a wrist watch |
|  | a sticky web |  | a spider web |
|  | a clean cup |  | a coffee cup |
|  | a sharp knife |  | a steak knife |
|  | a baby alligator |  | a baby bottle |
|  | a shiny tack |  | thumb tacks |
|  | a wire brush |  | a hair brush |
|  | a new ball |  | a foot ball |
|  | a toy gun |  | a machine gun |
|  | a silk bow |  | a Band -Aid |
|  | a bright star |  | a fire cracker |
|  | Mary Jones |  | a mail box |
|  | Bob Smith |  | a spray can |
|  | foreign affairs |  | a wine glass |
|  | down payment |  | a foot print |
|  | New York |  | a straw berry |
|  | Social Security |  | a fig leaf |
|  | City Hall |  | an ice cream |

Summary of Stress in Two-Word Phrases

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| First Word | set phrases streets Co. or Corp. nationalities of food nationalities of people | <i>light bulb</i> <i>Main Street</i> <i>Xerox Corporation</i> <i>Chinese food</i> <i>French guy</i> |
| Second Word | descriptive phrases road designations modified adjectives place names and parks institutions, or Inc. personal names and titles personal pronouns and possessives articles initials and acronyms chemical compounds colors and numbers most compound verbs percent and dollar hyphenated nationalities descriptive nationalities | <i>new information</i> <i>Fifth Avenue</i> <i>really big</i> <i>New York, Central Park</i> <i>Oakland Museum, Xerox Inc.</i> <i>Bob Smith, Assistant Manager</i> <i>his car, Bob 's brother</i> <i>the bus, a week, an hour</i> <i>U.S., IQ</i> <i>zinc oxide</i> <i>red orange, 26</i> <i>go away, sit down, fall off</i> <i>10 percent, 50 dollars</i> <i>African-American</i> <i>Mexican restaurant</i> |

Nationalities

When you are in a foreign country, the subject of nationalities naturally comes up a lot. It would be nice if there were a simple rule that said that all the words using nationalities are stressed on the first word. There isn't, of course. Take this preliminary quiz to see if you need to do this exercise. For simplicity's sake, we will stick with one nationality—American.

Exercise 1-33; Nationality Intonation Quiz CD 2 Track 1

Pause the CD and stress one word in each of the following examples. Repeat after me.

1. an American guy
2. an American restaurant
3. American food
4. an American teacher
5. an English teacher

When you first look at it, the stress shifts may seem arbitrary, but let's examine the logic behind these five examples and use it to go on to other, similar cases.

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1. an Américan guy

The operative word is *American*; *guy* could even be left out without changing the meaning of the phrase. Compare / *saw two American guys yesterday*, with / *saw two Americans yesterday*. Words like *guy, man, kid, lady, people* are de facto pronouns in an anthropocentric language. A strong noun, on the other hand, would be stressed— *They flew an American flag*. This is why you have the pattern change in Exercise 1-22: 4e, *Jim killed a man*; but 4b, *He killed a snake*.

2. an American restaurant

Don't be sidetracked by an ordinary descriptive phrase that happens to have a nationality in it. You are describing the restaurant, *We went to a good restaurant yesterday* or *We went to an American restaurant yesterday*. You would use the same pattern where the nationality is more or less incidental in / *had French toast for breakfast*. *French fry*, on the other hand, has become a