

Understanding 2-Syllable Stress Patterns

What is music? A combination of sounds patterned at various tones, volumes, and lengths, developing a rhythm. After repeated listening, the melody becomes recognizable, and eventually, predictable. The English language is just like music. It too, is a combination of sounds (syllables) patterned at various tones, volumes, and lengths, (stress), that develops a rhythm, and like music, the melody (intonation) of the English language, with repeated listening practice, becomes recognizable and predictable. As you continue to study language patterns, you too will become able to recognize the rhythm, or music, of English.

After studying syllables, the next step to understanding the rhythm of NAE is to study word stress. In any word of 2 syllables or more, one syllable will have a higher pitch (tone), and be louder (volume) and longer (length) than the others. This is the stressed syllable; the vowel sound, that is primarily emphasized.

Listen to and repeat these 2 syllable words with stress on the 1st syllable. Tap your pencil, clap your hands, or stamp your foot on the stressed part.

PEOPle	SPEcial	STUdent	TEAcher	UNder	CITy
MONday	AUgust	NEEded	TWENty	BABies	USEful

Listen to and repeat these 2 syllable words with stress on the 2nd syllable. Tap your pencil, clap your hands, or stamp your foot on the stressed part.

reTURN	aGAIN	beFORE	preTEND	proTECT	deNY
sugGEST	sixTEEN	aBOUT	toDAY	herSELF	aGREE

Listen to and repeat these words. Circle 1, if the 1st syllable is stressed. Circle 2, if the 2nd syllable is stressed.

1. woman	1	2	7. very	1	2
2. because	1	2	8. kitchen	1	2
3. mistake	1	2	9. instead	1	2
4. fifteen	1	2	10. message	1	2
5. practice	1	2	11. machine	1	2
6. perfect	1	2	12. argue	1	2

Listen to some 2-syllable words. Indicate to your teacher which syllable carries the stress by raising one or two fingers. One finger if you hear the primary stress on the 1st syllable, or two fingers if you hear stress on the 2nd syllable. Close your eyes as you listen to help you hear the 'music' of the language.