

Syllables and Stress

Spoken English has a rhythm to it. Some words are said louder and longer, and some words are said softer and shorter, and it is this back-and-forth between louder words, softer words, and longer words, shorter words, that gives English its rhythm. But where does this rhythm come from?

The rhythm comes from **syllable stress**. Syllables are what give a word its beat. Take for example the word *microwave*. When you say this word, you should feel that it has three beats, and you should be able to clap out to the beat. *Mi-cro-wave*. *Mi-cro-wave*. *Microwave* has three syllables, so there are three beats in this word.

In spoken English, one syllable is always going to receive the **most stress** compared to the other syllables in the word. In *microwave*, the first syllable *MI* has the most stress. *Mi-cro-wave*. *Mi-cro-wave*. We call that the **primary stress**.

Look at *microwave* again, but now I'll use the syllables DA-da in place of the actual word. DA is for stressed syllables, and da is for unstressed syllables.

MI-cro-wave

DA-da-da

Let's practice counting syllables and identifying the primary stress in some common words in English.

Practice Words:

Word	Number of syllables	Stress pattern	DA-da transcription
the	1	THE	DA
after	2	AF-ter	DA-da

because	2	be-CAUSE	da-DA
again	2	a-GAIN	da-DA
consistent	3	con-SIS-tent	da-DA-da
understand	3	un-der-STAND	da-da-DA
recognize	3	RE-cog-nize	DA-da-da
economy	4	e-CO-no-my	da-DA-da-da
education	4	ed-u-CA-tion	da-da-DA-da
information	4	in-for-MA-tion	da-da-DA-da
imagination	5	i-ma-gi-NA-tion	da-da-da-DA-da
occasionally	5	o-CCA-sion-a-llly	da-DA-da-da-da
recommendation	5	re-co-men-DA-tion	da-da-da-DA-da

Thanks for reading! Make sure you watch the video that goes along with this resource ([Syllables and Stress](#)) and contact me if you have any questions! Happy studying!

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