The most important rules for English word stress

**Definition:** Stress is an extra force used when pronouncing a particular word or syllable.

A syllable is any of the units into which a word may be divided. It usually consists of a vowel sound. This vowel sound can be alone as in “A”, or can be preceded by a consonant sound as in “To”, or can be followed by a consonant sound as in “Eat”, or it can be between two consonant sounds or more as in “Take”, “Shock”, “Sleep”, etc. So, a syllable equals (=) a vowel sound (=) one vowel sound or a diphthong. For example, in the word “Sleep” we have one vowel sound /i:/, but in “Take” we’ve got the diphthong (two vowel sounds) /æ/.

The weakest vowel sound in the English language is /ə/, and this sound is never stressed. It is called Schwa.

**The Rules**

1. A word of one syllable has stress on the first letter. E.g. 'Go - 'Hot – 'Long – 'Teach.
2. A word of two syllables:
   a. A noun of two syllables has stress on the first syllable. N = '1 + 2 stress on 1
      E.g. 'En/glish – 'Fa/ther – 'teach/er – 'Act/or – 'Pres/ent
      But in “Be/'lief” stress is on syllable two because the first contains /ə/.
   b. An adjective of two syllables has stress on the first syllable. Adj. = '1 + 2 stress on 1.
      E.g. 'Hap/py – 'Sun/ny – 'Hot/ter – 'Ug/ly – 'Stu/pid.
      But in “Cor/'rect” stress is on the second syllable because the first contains /ə/.
   c. An adverb or a preposition of two syllables has stress on the first syllable.
      Adv. = '1 + 2
      E.g. 'Un/der – 'O/ver – 'Ne/ver – 'Af/ter.
      But in “Be'low”, “Be'nearth”, “A'bove”, “A'go” stress is on the second syllable because the first contains /ə/.
   A verb of two syllables has stress on the second syllable. V = 1 + '2
   E.g. Cor/'rect – Pre/'sent – Be/'lieve.
   But in “La/bel”, “O/pen” stress is on the first syllable because the second syllable contains /ə/.

3. A compound noun = 'N1 + N2 takes stress on the first noun (N1)


5. A compound adjective = Adj. + 'V(pp) takes stress on the verb (V (pp)).
   E.G. Well-'done, Well-'known, Old-'fashioned, Narrow-'minded.

6. A compound verb = Preposition + 'V takes stress on the verb (V).
E.g. Under-'stand, Over-'do, Over-'flow, Under-'estimate.

7. A phrasal verb (V + 'Prep/or 'Adv) takes stress on the Prep/or Adv.
   E.g. Sit 'down, Fly a'way, Stand 'up, Climb 'up, Run a'way, Go 'into.

8. A word that ends (finishes) with one of these five (5) endings takes stress on the second syllable from end.

   The endings are (-ic(s), -sion(s), -tion(s), -ive, -ant)

   E.g. 'Graph/ic – 'Ma/gic – Me/'chan/ic – 'Pan/ic – 'Pub/lic.

   'Vi/sion – Di/'vi/sion – Con/'clu/sion – Tel/e/'vi/sion or 'Tel/e/vi/sion

   In/tro/'duc/tion – Si/tu/a/tion – In/'ten/tion.

   Ex/'pens/ive – Ef/fect/ive – Com'/puls/ive (But : In/'quis/i/tive)

   Im/'por/tant – Re/sis/tant – As/'sis/tant.

9. A word that ends (finishes) with one of these thirteen (13) endings takes stress on the third syllable from end. (Words of 3 syllables or more.)

   The endings are (-cy, -ty, -phy, -gy, -al, -er, --ful, -less, -ous, -fy, -ible, -able, -ist, -ness, -ize, etc…)

   E.g. U/ni/ver/si/ty, Sim/i/lar/i/ty, Re/al/i/ty

   Phi/'los/o/phy, Pho/'tog/ra/phy

   Ge/ol/o/gy, Tech/'nol/o/gy, Bi/ol/o/gy

   'Phys/i/cal, 'Man/u/al, Me/'chan/ic

   Pho/'tog/ra/pher, Ki/'lo/me/ter, 'Car/pen/ter (But: Com/'put/er)(2nd)

   'Beau/ti/ful, 'Plen/ti/ful (But: Re/spect/ful, De/light/ful) (2nd)

   'Col/our/less, 'Dan/ger/ous, 'Mar/vel/lous (But: Cou/ra/geous, De/licIOUS) (2nd)

   'Beau/ti/fy, 'Sim/pli/fy, 'Rec/ri/ble, 'Cre/di/ble, In/cre/di/ble

   Re/spect/a/ble, 'Ca/pa/ble, De/pend/a/ble

   'Jour/nal/ist, 'Sci/en/tist, 'Phys/is/ist, Bi/o/log/i/st

   'Help/less/ness, 'Care/less/ness, 'Clev/er/ness

   'Civ/i/lize, 'So/siol/ize, 'Ang/li/cize. But: 'Gen/e/ra/lize (2 and 3 contain /ə/)
« It is never late to learn »
“A word a day keeps ignorance away”
“A sound or a letter, learning is better
Say your word or write you letter”
“Utter it now, or utter it then,
You’ll put it down using your own Pen”