English Pronunciation 4

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Word Stress

When a word has more than two syllables in English, one syllable will receive more importance than the others when it is pronounced. This is the syllable that receives the **primary word stress**. This means that, compared to the other ones, the vowel sound of that syllable will be slightly **louder**, **longer**, and **at a higher pitch**.

For example, the word *dinner* is stressed on the first syllable.

The first syllable, *din*, will be louder and slightly longer than the last syllable –*ner*.

Understanding syllable stress is important in English not only for pronunciation, but also for comprehension because placing the stress on different syllables can change the meaning of a word.

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Word Stress Rules

One-syllable stress: One word has only one stress. (One word cannot have two stresses. If you hear two stresses, you hear two words.
Examples: bike, jump, cat, live, good, do…

Two syllable-word stress: There are many two-syllable words in English whose meaning and class change with a change in stress. The word progress, for example is a two-syllable word. If we stress the first syllable, it is a noun. But if we stress the second syllable, it becomes a verb.

Three syllable-word stress: Most three syllable words (nouns, adjectives or verbs) are stressed on the first syllable.
Examples: beautiful, hospital, finally, energy...

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