

Pronunciation and Intonation Sentence Stress

Sentence stress is where we pronounce some words more strongly than others when we want to emphasize a particular point. We do this by either pausing before the word we want to emphasize or we say it louder or at a different pitch. Sentence stress is what gives English its rhythm or beat. Pay attention that sentence stress is different from word stress which is accent on one syllable within a word. Sentence stress is, in fact, accent on certain words within a sentence. Now, let's figure out how it works:

Most sentences have two basic types of word. Content words which are the keywords of a sentence. They are the important words that carry the meaning or sense, the real content. The other type of words are structure words. Structure words are not very important words. They are small, simple words that make the sentence correct grammatically. They give the sentence its correct form, its structure. If you remove the structure words from a sentence, you will probably still understand the sentence. If you remove the content words from a sentence, you will not understand the sentence. The sentence has no sense or meaning.

In English sentences, content words are the ones which are accentuated or stressed. To get this point even better, listen to the examples mentioned below and pay attention to the content words which are stressed and highlighted:

1. The **movie** is **based** on a **famous** **book**.
2. The **house** was **built** in the **sixteenth** **century**.
3. The **castle** has been **visited** by **thousands** of **tourists**.
4. The **tower** was **designed** by a **famous** **architect**.
5. **Where** is it being **filmed**?
6. **Who** was it **written** **by**?

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