

### Lesson Six: Stress in Complex and Compound Words

The general definition of a complex word is a word composed of more than one grammatical unit or semantic one (i.e. morpheme). Hence, a word like *careful* (**care + ful**), or *blackbird* (**black + bird**), being composed of two grammatical units each, are complex words. *Carefully* (**care + ful + ly**) and *carelessness* (**care + less + ness**) are also complex and are composed of three grammatical units each.

Complex words are of two major types: words made of a basic **stem word** with the addition of an **affix**, and **compound words**, which are made of two (or occasionally more) independent English words (e.g. 'ice-cream', 'armchair'). We will look first at the words made with affixes; these will be called **affix words**. Affixes are of two sorts in English: **prefixes**, which come before the stem (e.g. prefix 'un-' stem 'pleasant' = 'unpleasant') and **suffixes**, which come after the stem (e.g. stem 'good' + suffix '-ness' = 'goodness').

- 1- **Prefixes:** Their effect on stress does not have the comparative regularity, independence and predictability of suffixes, and there is no prefix that always carries primary stress. Consequently, the best statement seems to say that stress in words with prefixes is governed by the same rules as those for words without prefixes.
- 2- **Suffixes:** There are so many suffixes that it will only be possible to examine a limited number of them. We will examine only those which are common and productive, i.e., are applied to a large number of stems and could be applied to more to make new English words.

✓ **Suffixes Carrying Primary Stress Themselves:**

'ese' = Japan /dʒə'pæn/ -- Japanese /dʒæpə'ni:z/

'ee' = Refuge /'refju:dʒ/ -- refugee /refju'dʒi:/

'eer' = mountain /'mʌʊntən/ -- mountaineer /mʌʊntə'nɪə/

'ain' = entertain /entə'teɪn/ -- ascertain /æsə'teɪn/

'ette' = cigarette /sɪgə'ret/ -- launderette /lɔ:n'dret/

'esque' 'ique' = Picturesque /pɪktʃə'resk/

✓ **Suffixes neither receiving stress nor affecting it:**

'able' = comfort /kʌmfət/ -- comfortable /ˈkʌmfətəbl/

'age' = anchor /ˈæŋkə/ -- anchorage /ˈæŋkərɪdʒ/

'al' = Refuse /rɪˈfjuːz/ -- refusal /rɪˈfjuːzl/

'en' = wide /ˈwaɪd/ -- widen /ˈwaɪdɪn/

'ful' = wonder /ˈwʌndə/ -- wonderful /ˈwʌndəfl/

'ing' = amaze /əˈmeɪz/ -- amazing /əˈmeɪzɪŋ/

'ish' = devil /ˈdeɪvl/ -- devilish /ˈdeɪvlɪʃ/

'like' = bird /ˈbɜːd/ -- birdlike /ˈbɜːdlaɪk/

'less' = power /ˈpaʊə/ -- powerless /ˈpaʊələs/

'ly' = hurried /ˈhʌrɪd/ -- hurriedly /ˈhʌrɪdli/

'ment' = punish /ˈpʌnɪʃ/ -- punishment /ˈpʌnɪʃmənt/

'ness' = yellow /ˈjeləʊ/ -- yellowness /ˈjeləʊnəs/

'ous' = poison /ˈpɔɪzn/ -- poisonous /ˈpɔɪznəs/

'y' = fun /ˈfʌn/ -- funny /ˈfʌni/

✓ **Suffixes not carrying stress but affecting it, words ending with these suffixes, the syllable preceded these suffixes carries the stress:**

'eous' = advantage /ədˈvɑːntɪdʒ/ -- advantageous /ədˈvʌntədʒəs/

'graphy' = photo /ˈfəʊtəʊ/ -- photography /fəˈtɒgrəfi/

'ial' = proverb /ˈprɒvɜːb/ -- proverbial /prəˈvɜːbiəl/

'ic' = climate /klaɪmət/ -- climatic /klaɪˈmætɪk/

'ion' = perfect /ˈpɜːfɪkt/ -- perfection /pəˈfektʃn/

'ive' = reflex /ˈriːfleks/ -- reflexive /rɪˈfleksɪv/

✓ **Some words end with the suffixes below, count three syllable from the end of the word, the third is stressed:**

'ity' = tranquil /ˈtræŋkwɪl/ -- tranquility /træŋˈkwɪləti/

'ly' = accidentally /æksɪˈdentəli/

3- **Compound Words** : They may receive stress either on the first word or the second.

**a)** - Words which do not receive primary stress normally have secondary stress. Perhaps the most familiar type of compound word is the one which combines two nouns, and normally has stress on the first element, as in:

Typewriter /ˈtaɪpraɪtə/ -- sunrise /ˈsʌnraɪz/ -- suitcase /ˈsuːtkeɪs/ -- tea-cup /ˈtiːkʌp/

**b)** - Stress moves to the second element if the first element is a number, as in:

four-wheels /fɔː ˈwiːlz/

**c)** - Stress moves to the second element if the first element is an adjective and the second ends with (ed), as in:

Bad-tempered /bæd ˈtempəd/

**d)** - Stress moves to the second element if the compound word functioned as an adverb, as in:

South-East /saʊθ ˈiːst/

**e)** - Stress moves to the second element if the compound word functioned as a verb, as in:

Ill-treat /ɪl ˈtri:t/

#### 4- **Word class Pairs:**

There are several dozen pairs of two-syllable words with identical spelling which differ from each other in stress placement, apparently according to word class (**noun, verb or adjective**).

✓ **If the word is used as a noun, the first syllable is stressed.**

✓ **If the word is used as a verb, the second syllable is stressed.**

abstract	/ 'æbstrækt/ (A)	/ æb 'strækt/ (V)
conduct	/ 'kɒndʌkt/ (N)	/ kən 'dʌkt/ (V)
contract	/ 'kɒntrækt/(N)	/ kən 'trækt / (V)
contrast	/ 'kɒntrɑ:st/ (N)	/ kən 'trɑ:st/ (V)
desert	/ 'dezət/ (N)	/ dɪ 'zɜ:t/ (V)
escort	/ 'esko:t/(N)	/ ɪ 'sko:t / (V)
export	/ 'ekspɔ:t/ (N)	/ ɪk 'spɔ:t / (V)
import	/ 'impɔ:t/ (N)	/ ɪm 'pɔ:t / (V)
insult	// 'ɪnsʌlt/ (N)	/ ɪn 'sʌlt / (V)

object	/ 'ɒbdʒɪkt/(N)	/ əb 'dʒekt/(V)
perfect	/ 'pɜ:fɪkt/(A)	/ pə 'fekt/(V)
permit	/ 'pɜ:mɪt/(N)	/ pə 'mɪt/(V)
present	/ 'preznt/( N, A)	/ prɪ 'zent/(V)
produce	/ 'prɒdju:s/(N)	/ prə 'dju:s/(V)
protest	/ 'prəʊtest/ (N)	/ prə 'test/(V)
rebel	/ 'rebl/ (N)	/ rɪ 'bel/(V)
record	/ 'rekɔ:d/ (N)	/ rɪ 'kɔ:d/(V)
subject	/ 'sʌbdʒɪkt/(N)	/ səb 'dʒekt/(V)