



## Word Stress

This handout is to help you with the pronunciation of some words which crop up frequently when you are talking about Literature and Linguistics.

The words here were collected in the Advanced Oral Proficiency Class which focuses on topics from Literature and Linguistics; they are frequently mispronounced. The focus of this handout is not on individual sounds but on where the stress goes within a word.

Example:

The word “contents “ has two syllables “con“ and “tents “ so which gets the stress?

This handout has three parts:

- (1) Test yourself
- (2) The right answers
- (3) Some tips

### (1) Test yourself

Mark clearly the stressed syllable:

abbreviate

abbreviation

also

although

analogy

analyse

analysis

analyst

appalling

appropriately

Arabic

association

autobiography

categorical  
category  
Catholic  
compound (noun)  
contents  
decade  
decadent  
differentiate  
display  
epitome (careful, it has 4 syllables)  
facet  
Homer  
indistinct  
lexeme  
metaphor  
morpheme  
morphology  
mosaic  
narrate  
narrative  
narrator  
origin  
original  
parentage  
philosophical  
philosophy  
phoneme  
phonemic  
proprietor  
romance  
simile (careful, it has 3 syllables)  
variable  
variety  
vary

## (2) The right answers

I have capitalised the stressed syllable to make it really clear.

Please note that there are differences of opinion on how words are divided into syllables. Do we pronounce “morpheme” as *mor – pheme*? Or do we pronounce it as *morph – eme*? Is it *a – bbrev – i – a – tion*? Or is it *ab – brev – i – a – tion*? See the Longman Pronunciation Dictionary for a discussion of this. No matter, the stressed syllable remains the same.

aBBREViate

abbreviAtion

ALso

aLTHOUGH

anALogy

ANalyse

aNALysis

ANalyst

aPPALLing

aPPROPriately

ARabic

associAtion

autobiOgraphy

cateGORical

CATegory

CATHolic

COMpound (noun)

CONtents

DECade

DECadent

diffeREntiate

disPLAY

e-PIT-o-me (careful, it has 4 syllables)

FACet

HOMer

IndisTINCT

LEXeme

METaphor

MORpheme  
morPHOLogy  
moSAIC  
naRRATE  
NARRative  
naRRATor  
ORigin  
oRIGinal  
PARentage  
philoSOPHical  
phiLOSophy  
PHONeme  
phoNEMic  
proPRletor  
roMANCE  
SIMile (careful, it has 3 syllables)  
VARiable  
vaRlety  
VARy

### **(3) Tips**

If there are any of these you had problems with you can

- (1) check the pronunciation in the Cobuild
- (2) mark the stressed syllable with a highlighting pen
- (3) say it out loud several times
- (4) convince yourself it is right (e.g. if you have been saying “~~caTEGory~~” or “~~anaLYSis~~” all your life, it can be quite hard to convince yourself that “CATegory” and “aNALysis” is correct English.)
- (5) put the word with the correct syllable stress in a sentence that makes sense to you and use it

These tips may look obvious or childish, but they are useful. The point is that working through this list once will not get the correct pronunciation into your memory and onto your tongue if you have been mispronouncing it for years. There has to be some effort made, and not just once.

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