



Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host, Ben Worthington.

Ben: IELTS speaking: pronunciation and sentence stress. In this tutorial, we're going to look at how we can use word stress and sentence stress to score higher in the pronunciation criteria for your IELTS exam. Obviously, I'm talking about the IELTS speaking part of the exam.

Mastering or at least being aware of these features will help you to develop a wider range of pronunciation features in your IELTS exam. As you hopefully know that pronunciation accounts for 25% of your speaking score and in my experience it's usually an area that's avoided out of all the aspects of preparing for the exam, pronunciation seems to be avoided because it's one of the most challenging and also it largely depends on what your own native language is.

For example, Chinese learners are going to have different challenges to-- sorry, Chinese learners of English are going to have different challenges compared to Brazilian learners of English. I think this is one of the reasons why it's usually avoided. Also, it's quite difficult to develop drills or exercises that can be used both for maybe Brazilians-- sorry, Portuguese speakers, I almost said it, Portuguese speakers, Spanish speakers, Russian speakers. This is probably one of the other reasons why it's avoided.

The way that you pronounce your words and the pauses that you make are all part of pronunciation and it'll probably make a significant difference when it comes to your IELTS speaking exam. A very important feature of pronunciation is word stress. This is a challenge



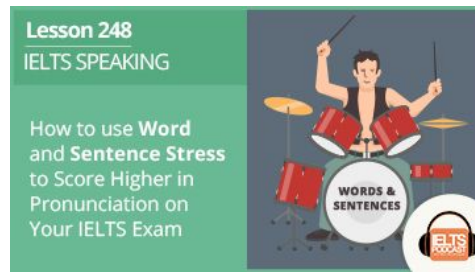
because it can really alter the meaning of what you are saying and as you probably know that there are some words that are exactly the same-- spelled exactly the same, but regarding where we put the stress often changes the meaning.

For example, produce and produce. We're going to jump into this a little bit later. What is word stress? Well, in English when a word has more than one syllable, one part of that word will be more stressed than the other. This is called word stress. This means that one of the vowel sounds of that syllable will be pronounced longer, louder, and at a slightly higher pitch than the other parts of the word.

If you mispronounce the word and place the stress on the wrong syllables, the listener will not understand you properly. Along with changing the meaning of the word, the stress can also change the part of the speech especially in the cases where words have the same spelling. For example, as I just mentioned with produce and produce. We've also got contest and contest.

Both of them may sound similar, but if we have the first one, "I'm going to enter a contest tomorrow," then that's going to be a competition, but if somebody contests the IELTS score, that means they are going to basically fight it or they are going to argue against it.

Now, just one sort of like mention that I think will be useful for you to develop these skills and this awareness. First of all, obviously listen to the end of this tutorial, but it's just an opportunity now to mention the fact that now with the new apps, IELTS podcast apps that we



have in the Google Play store and that we have in the iOS App Store, you can download our own IELTS podcast app from ieltspodcast.com.

In this app, you're not only going to get the notifications when we list new episodes, but also within the app, we are sending the transcript. This is really useful especially if you are struggling with understanding me, but also if you know that pronunciation is an issue then I would recommend getting audio material, finding the transcripts, and then going through it and circling the stress on the words especially-- you've got the transcript and you're going through and just circle where the stress is on the words.

If you want to take it to the next level, what you can do is just pause the recording and then go through and do exactly the same and mark where you think the stress will be then listen to the audio version to compare. Okay, as I said, you can get the transcript with the new app. Let's move on.

There are some more words that are spelled exactly the same and then depending on the stress determines the meaning. So, we've got present and present. We've got object and object. I think the best way to do this is to basically give them in context. For example, if I say I object to you studying and watching cartoons at the same time that means I'm against it, but if I say there's an object on the table that will help you score higher, then obviously I'm referring to some kind of item.

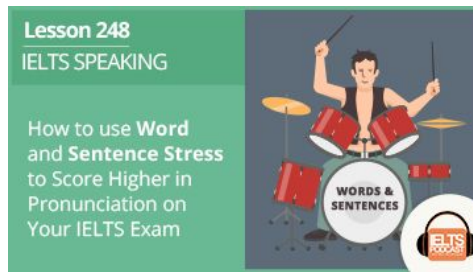


To get-- let's see. To determine or if you are unsure where the stress is, you can also check the dictionary and you can also check out forvo.com. That's an online pronunciation dictionary. F-O-R-V-O.com Here are a few rules that will give you a general understanding when it comes to basic rules about word stress.

We've got vowels are stressed, not the consonants. The vowel sounds are stressed. One word cannot have two stresses, so each word has just one stress. If a word is both a verb and a noun, the noun stress is usually on the first syllable whereas the verb is stressed on the second syllable.

There are also some additional rules. For most nouns with two syllables, the stress is on the first syllable. So, we have parents, embrace, chicken, knowledge. With regards to prefixes and suffixes, these are not stressed. So we have effortless; it was effortless to get band 9 with Ben's online course. Sorry, let's carry on. So, prefixes and suffixes aren't stressed.

Next one: undo; 'un' obviously there is the prefix. Opening and inside. There we go. Third rule: if a word ends in 'er' we stress the syllable before it. Teacher, painter, loser, dancer. If the stress-- if we've got a compound word where it's two separate words pushed together to make a new word, then we stress the first part. For example, blackbird, greenhouse, bedroom, sunrise. If the word ends with -ly and if it's three syllables long, we will stress the first syllable. I'll give you an example: perfectly, quietly, basically, drunkenly.



With regards to sentence stress and this is important because it's with regards to the overall rhythm of what we're saying. So, the overall rhythm of the sentence will put different stresses on different parts of the sentence. Words that are usually stressed would be the content words and these are the words that have the most meaning.

So, if we pull these words out of the sentence, it's probably not going to make much sense whereas if we pull other aspects of the sentence out we could still probably grasp the meaning. These content words which we stress or which are most often stressed in the sentence are the nouns, adjectives, the main verbs, the wh- questions such as who, what, where, when, etc., negative words: never, neither, not; modal verbs: could, should, might, and then the adverbs: carefully, loudly, quickly.

Structural words which are holding a sentence together are usually not stressed. This means adjectives, prepositions, possessive adjectives his, her, my; personal pronouns, I, you, he, and the conjunctions, but, and, or. These are general rules. Sometimes depending on our speech we might want to emphasize it. If it's really important in the sentence then we're going to obviously emphasize it a little bit more.

Here I'm going to give you some examples of stressing certain words in these sentences. "They won't go to school today." I'm stressing the important part of the sentence; the content. Next sentence: Alison's father had a heart attack. These are the important words of the sentence that we are stressing. If I emit "had a" so it's just "Alison's father heart attack," you know what



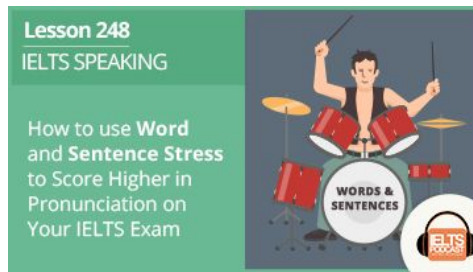
I'm saying. So, that's why-- you know what I'm saying even though that's grammatically incorrect. So, that's why we're not putting that much stress on them.

Next one: have you seen the new movie with Brad Pitt? You, the, and with were just not stressed because they're not essential. However, have, you, seen, the new movie, with Brad Pitt, those are the content words.

Next one: I've never heard of that. Practically, the whole of that sentence was stressed apart from "of". I've never heard of that. Next one: I'm going back to Vienna for good. The key words, the key content words. Next one: The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain. Okay, a bit cliché you're probably thinking. Either way, you get the point. The main content words are the ones we stress.

With regards to your IELTS speaking, it's really important that you get to grips with this and I'd even recommend having a listen to some sample IELTS speaking examples and audio recordings which you can find in our previous podcasts and you'll see that the good ones they are stressing the content words in the answer.

You need to find a balance and this is what it comes down to when we talk about sounding natural. There are lots of exercises that you can do. My favorite and one that I am continuously recommending is that you mimic the sounds or you find some authentic native English speaker material and now that we are releasing the transcripts, you could even do it with my voice.

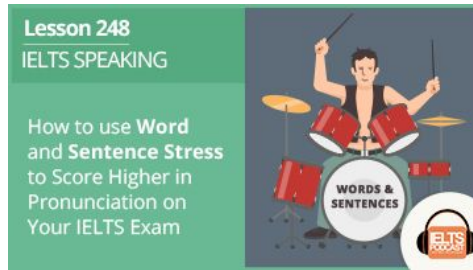


My voice is clear. People understand it. If I were to critic my own voice, I would probably say that some vowel sounds are a little bit stronger. That's because I come from the north of England, some vowel sounds like the 'u' and the 'o' may be a little bit stronger, but everything else is rather clear and that's why hopefully, there is very little difficulty for you to understand me.

So, what I wanted to say anyway was find some authentic native speaker material, find the transcript and then go through that audio recording. Listen, pause, mimic and if you're getting really good with this read ahead, record yourself saying it and then listen and compare.

As I've said in previous episodes focused dedicated attention. 15 minutes of in-depth focused active study is much better than 2 hours casually watching a film. Of course, passively listening is also better than nothing and it's definitely better than listening to music or listening to material in your own language. However, the real improvements are going to be when you sit down and you dedicate a good 20-30 minutes to really focused study and, as we mentioned in other episodes, if you can do this frequently and develop it into a habit.

Right then, that's everything from me in this tutorial. I hope you found it valuable. If you've got any ideas, please email them in. If you've got any ideas for new episodes and new content that you'd like to hear and new tutorials, then send them in to us at ieltpodcast@gmail.com.



Also remember to sign up to the email list and you'll get a big PDF full of IELTS material which as sample essays, it has lots of tips and it has a few special offers regarding the online course, the Jump to a Band 7 or It's Free online course.

One last thing, if you know anybody who's struggling with IELTS, then tell them to listen to IELTS podcast. Tell them to download it, fill their phone up with all the recordings and to work through and also just to get in contact if they are struggling. We can offer-- we've got the online course, we can review your essays. There are lots of resources there. We'd love to see you pass.

Why not set this as an objective? To be on the show and to be interviewed and basically get instant global stardom, just joking, but set it as a goal to join us on the podcast. "Hi Ben, my name is Maria and I passed and I got a band 9..." Just one last thing before we finish. If you are setting objectives good for you. That's how we improve. We set objectives, we set targets, we put time limits on the targets and that's how we improve.

Anyway, I'm going on a bit now. All the best with your IELTS exam and as I said, any struggles, please if you've got any problem, if you're struggling with anything just get in contact. We'd love to help you. Take care.

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com