

Rhythm of English

Rhythm is the sense of movement in speech, which is marked by stress, timing and quantity of syllables. Spoken English words with two or more syllables have different stress and length patterns.

The rhythm of English is based on the contrast of stressed and unstressed syllables in regular intervals, with the stresses falling within content words.

The stressed syllables of the sentence create beats. The beats of the following sentence fall on the words 'bought,' 'car,' and the first syllable of 'Tuesday.'

I **bought** a **car** on **Tuesday**.
 • ● • ● • ● •

To know whether the words are stress or not, we can consider the types of words: content and function.

Words that have the most stress in English are called content words.

Content words are usually the nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns (demonstrative, possessive, reflexive, and interrogative). These words are important to express the main meaning of the sentence.

Nouns: Sam, chair, happiness, etc.

Verbs: read, love, dance, etc.

Adjectives: red, big, strong, etc.

Adverbs: nicely, patiently, equally, yesterday, always, etc.

Negative words: not, never, neither, etc.

Modals: should, could, might, etc. but not will and can.

Yes and No in short answers.

Quantifiers: some, many, no, all, one, two, three, etc.

Wh-Question words.

Function words are those words that are weaker and shorter. They include auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, and possessive adjectives. These words are less important in expressing the meaning of the sentence.

Auxiliary verbs: are, was, has, could, would, etc.

Prepositions: at, on, to, near, etc.

Conjunctions: and, so, but, not, however, etc.

Determiners: a, an, the, some, any, etc.

Pronouns: I, you, she, him, us, ours, etc.

Examples:

1. **John wants** to be an **actor**, so he **wants** to **live** in **Hollywood**.
2. **Mary made** an **appointment** with the **dentist** on **Monday**.
3. **What** did you **do yesterday**?

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