

MATERIALS AND METHODS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH STRESS AND RHYTHM

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WORD STRESS

1. Tasks to build general awareness of syllables and stress.
 - in a text, find all examples of words with 1 (2, 3,..etc) syllable(s)
 - try to write a sentence with words of one syllable
 - in a text, find examples of 2-syllable word stressed on the first syllable, etc (these can be done in pairs or groups)

2. Learn familiar examples of stress patterns

	2 syllables	3 syllables	4 syllables
stress on last syllable	BEHIND	CIGARETTE	SUPERIMPOSE
stress on next-to-last	FORWARD	TOGETHER	INVITATION
stress 2nd from last	-	YESTERDAY	NEGOTIATE

3. Recognition practice (ear-training)
 - nonsense words: 'mama ma'ma mama'ma ma'mama
(can be done as analytic listening with multiple-choice responses)
 - take down stress patterns for new words, either in transcription (if known), or mark stress on spelling forms, or use simple diagrams (aristocracy = x x X x x)

4. Learn some general rules

- For instance, in nouns, stress the penultimate syllable (next to last) if it is heavy. Otherwise stress the antepenultimate (second-to-last).
- Compounds vs noun phrases
'bluebottle (=large fly) vs blue 'bottle (=bottle which is blue).
- Names of streets and roads:
'Oxford Street but Oxford 'Circus, Oxford 'Road

5. Suffixes which put the stress on the preceding syllable:

-ic, -ian, -ion, -ial

Exercises (to be done in pairs/groups):

Please be more (specify) in future when you give (instruct)

This is a (history) occasion

We are grateful to everyone who has made a (contribute)

RHYTHM

1 Demonstrating rhythm

Rhythm is a pattern in time formed by syllables of different types. The stressed syllables are the beats in the rhythm. Very regular rhythm is found in simple poetry such as nursery rhymes and Limericks:

There was a young man of Devizes (= a town in England)

Whose ears were different sizes

One was so small

It was no use at all

But the other won several prizes.

2 Listening practice: identifying stresses in sentences.

(Sentences can be repeated aloud for practice, students can

work in pairs).

Examples: Of course we want to come.

She arrived in time for tea.

- 3 Learn about weak forms - at least the following very common words:

a am an and are as at be been but can do does for from had
has have he her him his is me must not of shall she some
than that the them there to us was we will you

- 4 -Go through sentences or a text and circle all the words which would be spoken as weak forms. In this way, predict rhythm in written examples and then check with spoken versions.

-or, go through a text and underline all the important words which should receive a stress. Again, predict the rhythm and check with spoken versions.

- 5 Production practice

In one type of production exercise, the student can be given a list of stressed "content" words such as:
for'gotten, 'post, 'letter. These words have to be spoken aloud with an even rhythm. Then the student(s) must add function words to turn them into full sentences and read them aloud again with the same rhythm.

For example: for'gotten, 'post, 'letter -->

I've for'gotten to 'post your 'letter

in'vite, 'friends, 'party -->

We could in'vite her 'friends to our 'party