

SENTENCE STRESS

WHAT IS SENTENCE STRESS?

- Remember that **word stress (syllable stress)** is the '*beat*' on one or more syllables within a word; **sentence stress** is the '*beat*' on certain words within a sentence.
- In other words, **sentence stress** can be described as the '*rhythm*' of spoken language.
- Like word or syllable stress, **sentence stress** can help you to understand a language, especially when spoken fast.

WHY IS '**STRESS**' IMPORTANT IN PRONUNCIATION?

- **Stress** is important because it adds **rhythm** when you speak.
- If you **stress** all the words in an utterance, you may sound unpleasant or even cause misunderstanding, because:
 1. You are giving too much information; and
 2. English native speakers usually stress all words only when they are impatient or angry.



According to the way they function, words in a language are normally classified into two types:

- a). **Content words**, are the key words of a sentence. They are the important words that carry the meaning or sense.

- b). **Structure words**, are not very important words. They are small, simple words that make the sentence correct grammatically. They give the sentence its correct form or structure.

- In the previous example, there is 1 syllable between “**sell**” and “**car**” and 3 syllables between “**car**” and “**gone**”, but the *time* (*t*) between “**sell**” and “**car**” and between “**car**” and “**gone**” is the same.

Will you **sell** my car because I've gone to France?



1 syllable

3 syllables

We maintain a constant beat on the stressed words (**sell**, **car**, **gone**, **France**). To do this, we say "**my**" more slowly, and "**because I've**" more quickly.

RULES OF SENTENCE STRESS

- The basic rules of sentence stress in English are:
 1. **Content words** are stressed;
 2. **Structure words** are unstressed; and
 3. **The time between stressed words** is always the same.

The following table can help you decide which words are the content words and which are the structure words:

