

SENTENCE STRESS & RHYTHM

As we saw earlier, many short, unstressed words lose their full vowels in English when spoken at speed, and are pronounced with the unstressed neutral sound /ə/ (the schwa). So it is also with unstressed syllables in longer words. This is closely related to the basic rhythm of English phrases and sentences, which is very different from Finnish.

Compare:

Sää-tie-do-tus o-do-tet-ta-vis-sa huo-mis-il-taan as-ti.

Each syllable lasts about the same length of time

HERE is the WEATHer foreCAST for SATurday theeLEventhofjuLY.

The STRESSED syllables come at approximately even intervals of time. When their number varies, the unstressed syllables are spoken at varying speeds, in order to maintain this even spacing of stressed syllables.

Practise with the following short pairs:

for TWENTy YEARS

to TRY aGAIN

unTIL he COMES

MEANS of TRANSport

HALF a PINT of LAger at the END of the DAY

for as LONG as it TAKES

Peter will SEND you a NOTE of it

NONE of the oRiginal reQUIREments he was in Paris at the TIME of the coLLAPSE

Read the following as naturally as possible, taking into account rhythm and stress:

This was the first time they had arranged a meeting for the entire team.

A shortage of skilled labor can be as detrimental as underfunding to the well-being of an enterprise.

The site for the new factory was chosen only after an exhaustive study of all possible locations.

Be sure to ask for an invoice to show the accountant.

READ THE PASSAGE ALOUD:

Remember that the more unstressed syllables between each stress, the faster they must be spoken.

The **NO**tion that a **GOOD PRO**duct **SELLS** it**SELF** / would be a **FACT** of **LIFE** in an **iDEAL** **WORLD**. / In **SUCH** a **WORLD**, the **PUBLIC** would **NOT ONLY** **CHOOSE** the **BEST PRO**duct for the **BEST REA**sons, / they would **ALSO** **KNOW** about it **withOUT** being **TOLD**: / In the **WORLD** we **LIVE** in, however, / the **OPeR**ations of **PUBLIC** **reL**ations and **MARKet** **reSE**ARCH are **INdisPEN**sable. / a **PRO**duct has **NOT ONLY** to be **BEST**, / or to be **SEEN** to be **BEST**, / it **FIRST** has to be **SEEN** at **ALL**, / and **THEN** in the **SORT** of **LIGHT** that will **perSU**ADE **conSU**mers to **BUY** it. / **ALL THIS** we could say is **SELF-E**vident, / but it's **surPR**ising **HOW** **MANy** **GOOD PRO**ducts **FAIL** to **GAIN** a **FOO**thold in the **MARKet** / for **LACK** of **WELL-PLANNED** and **iM**aginative **MARK**eting. / **THIS** may be **DUE NOT ONLY** to a **CERT**ain **deGREE** of **NEGL**igence and **OV**ersight, / but **ALSO** to a **KIND** of **PRIDE** on the **PART** of **CERT**ain **MANuFACT**urers, / which **inHI**bits them from **CRY**ing their **WARES** in the **MOST** **effE**ctive **MAN**ner. / They **HAVE**, to say it **BRIE**fly, an **AT**titude **PRO**blem, / and **ONE** that **NEEDS** **SWIFT** and **deCI**sive **CO**ming to **TERMS** with, / if **comMER**cial **surVI**val and **sucCESS** is the **NAME** of the **GAME**./

INTONATION - AN INTRODUCTION

RISING VERSUS FALLING TONE : STATEMENTS VS. QUESTIONS

Repeat:

❖ RISING

You want coffee?

FALLING

You want coffee.

❖ YES OR NO – QUESTIONS

Is there a public phone nearby?

Is this correct?

❖ IS IT SOMETHING, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Shall we deliver it in May, or June?

Will the tiling go all the way up, or only part of the way?

❖ WH-? QUESTIONS (voice kept high, not dropped until the end): INFORMATION-SEEKING

When did you LAST visit R

O
M

E, Jack? (a COUPLE of MONTHS ago)

❖ RISING TONE IN WH -? QUESTIONS – REPETITION/CLARIFICATION SEEKING

A: When do you want to go for lunch?

B: (Indistinctly) About half past twelve to one.

A: Sorry, when do you want to go?

A: How much does the bill come to?

B: Forty-five thousand,

B: How much?!

❖ TURNING A WH -? QUESTION INTO A YES-OR-NO ONE for politeness, sympathy, etc.

WHERE is the CLOAKroom?

Could you tell me where the cloakroom is?

WHY DON'T you deCIDE?

Is there any reason why you don't decide? (delicate)

❖ **POLITE INVITATIONS** vs. **COMMANDS**
Rising Falling

Come in Come in

❖ **REASSURING/ENCOURAGING THE SPEAKER → RISING TONE**

Uh-huh? I see Yes? Go on... All right If you like...

❖ **LIST OF OBJECTS → RISING TONE UNTIL THE LAST ITEM, THEN FALLING**

Read the instructions, find out what it is that you can do, and then ask for help. ↘

A: These are the main ingredients: flour, sugar, eggs, milk, baking powder...

B: And?

C: Oh, let me just see... and cinnamon. ↘

❖ **STRESS SHIFT** depending on the word we stress we get different answers

Is she **FEEDING** her husband? Is she feeding **HER HUSBAND**?

❖ **NEW INFORMATION vs. OLD**

The Pattersons **NOT ONLY** have a green **FORD**, and they **ALSO** have a **BLACK** Ford.

❖ **THE USE OF 'DO' IN CONTRADICTIONS**

Why don't you like chocolate? I do like chocolate!

Also: Well, now that we're not going... We **ARE** going!

❖ **TAG QUESTIONS – FALLING vs. RISING**

It's the **TWENTy-FOURTH** today, **ISN'T** it?
(making a statement)

It's the **TWENTy-FOURTH** today, **iSN'T** IT?
(asking for verification)

PRACTISE DIALOGUES OVERLEAF