

## ***SYLLABLE***

Syllable refers to a unit of the lowest level in the pronunciation system of a language. This unit is found above the level of individual sounds. In other words, a syllable is constituted by either one sound or a combination of sounds. For example, the English syllable 'he' is formed by two sounds represented by the alphabets 'h' and 'i'. But the syllable 'eye' has only one sound. A Syllable is a very important unit in analysing and describing speech sounds.

Although a syllable is a bit difficult to define, it is very easy to identify a syllable. Each syllable must contain a vowel sound. Thus the number of vowel sounds in a word corresponds to the number of syllables in it. For example, the word 'examination' consists of five syllables. This can be shown by the fact that the word contains five vowel sounds. Each of the vowel sounds forms the basis of a syllable as shown below:

ex-a-mi-na-tion

It has to be mentioned here that vowel sounds are different from vowel alphabets. 'tion' is the last syllable of the word 'examination'. It has two vowel alphabets. But in pronunciation they represent one vowel sound. Thus it forms one syllable.

It has already become clear that a Vowel sound is the most essential element in a syllable. A Vowel is the obligatory elements in a syllable. Consonant Sounds may occur on either sides of the vowel. In the word 'examination', the first syllable 'ex' has a vowel sound followed by a consonant sound. The second syllable 'xa' has a consonant and vowel combination. The third and fourth syllables also follow this pattern. The fifth syllable 'tion' has two consonant sounds occurring on both the sides of the vowel sound.

The concept of syllable is very important for understanding the prosody of a piece of poetry. Proper division of words into syllables help in understanding the metrical pattern of a line of poetry.

## ***ACCENT or STRESS***

Accent or Stress refers to relative degree of prominence with which a particular syllable in a word is pronounced. In English polysyllabic words, one particular syllable (sometimes two) stands out from the remainder. This happens because of the use of greater breath force during the pronunciation of that particular syllable. For example, in the English word 'prominent', the first syllable is pronounced with greater breath force. Thus, the first syllable in 'prominent' has accent. On the other hand, in the word 'perceive' the second syllable is pronounced with greater breath force. Thus the second syllable in 'perceive' has accent or stress. Word Accent or Stress form an integral part of English language. A change in this pattern may deform the word beyond recognition. Word Accent or Stress is shown in dictionary entries by a vertical stroke above and in front of the accented or stressed syllable.

Accent or Stress sometimes changes according to the function of a particular word. When some words change from Noun to Verb or vice-versa the accent/stress pattern also changes. In Conduct (Noun) the first syllable receives accent or stress. But when Conduct is used as a Verb, the accent or stress shifts to the second syllable. Similar is the case with words like 'object' and 'permit.'

Accent or stress also changes when words change their grammatical category. For example, the word 'Politics' receives accent or stress on the first syllable. But 'political' receives accent or stress on the second syllable. 'politician' receives accent or stress on the third syllable.

Studies have shown that in English disyllabic nouns and adjectives, accent or stress falls on the first syllable. This happens in the case of 'process' (Noun). On the other hand disyllabic Verbs get accent or stress on the second syllable as in 'process' (Verb). Thus accent or stress is an important feature of the pronunciation of English.