

This page shows the way in which **the meaning of a word can change if you stress a different syllable**. This change only happens with a few, specific words, many of which are listed here – it doesn't apply to all words in the English language. Most of the words are two syllables long – there are just a few examples with three syllables.

The examples fall into two categories:

1. Those which keep the same general meaning, but which change from noun to verb when the stress moves from the first to the second syllable.
2. Those which change their meaning completely – most of them change from noun to verb, but a few change to an adjective.

1. CHANGE FROM NOUN TO VERB, SAME GENERAL MEANING

addict

A D D - i c t	Rob is a crack cocaine ADD-ict. <i>(Rob is a person who uses crack cocaine and cannot stop doing it)</i>
a d d - I C T	If you keep playing that game, you will get add-ICT-ed to it! <i>(you will become an addict)</i>

conflict

C O N - f l i c t	The two friends were in CON-flict. <i>(didn't agree about something)</i>
c o n - F L I C T	Your two accounts of what happened con-FLICT. <i>(your stories don't agree with each other)</i>

contest

C O N - t e s t	He is taking part in a boxing CON-test. <i>(a fighting competition)</i>
c o n - T E S T	I'm sorry, I have to con-TEST your figures. <i>(I can't agree with your figures)</i>

contrast

C O N - t r a s t	There's quite a CON-trast between their political views. <i>(a big difference)</i>
c o n - T R A S T	I will compare and con-TRAST these two poems. <i>(show the differences between them)</i>

convert

C O N - v e r t	He is a CON-vert to Buddhism. <i>(he has changed his religion)</i>
c o n - V E R T	I'm sorry, you will never con-VERT me. <i>(you will never persuade me to change my beliefs/opinions)</i>

decrease

DE - c r e a s e	There has been a DE-crease in sales recently. <i>(we have sold less than usual)</i>
d e - C R E A S E	We need to de-CREASE the number of children in the class to make it more effective.

import

IM - p o r t	Coffee is an IM-port from Brazil. <i>(coffee is brought here from Brazil)</i>
i m - P O R T	We would like to im-PORT more coffee over the next few years.

increase

IN - c r e a s e	There has been an IN-crease in accidents recently. <i>(there have been more accidents)</i>
i n - C R E A S E	We need to in-CREASE our sales figures. <i>(sell more)</i>

insult

IN - s u l t	What she said felt like an IN-sult. <i>(she said something bad)</i>
i n - S U L T	Please don't in-SULT me. <i>(don't say bad things to me)</i>

perfect

PER - f e c t	Your homework is PER-fect. <i>(it has no mistakes in it)</i>
p e r - F E C T	We need to per-FECT our design before we can put this new product on the market. <i>(we need to improve it)</i>

permit

PER - m i t	Do you have a PER-mit to drive this lorry? <i>(document giving permission)</i>
p e r - M I T	Will you per-MIT me to park my car in front of your house? <i>(allow me)</i>

pervert

P E R - v e r t	Niharika is a PER-vert. <i>(she has strange sexual preferences)</i>
p e r - V E R T	The man was arrested on a charge of attempting to per-VERT the course of justice. <i>(interfering with the proper workings of the legal process)</i>

present

P R E S - e n t	She gave me a nice PRES-ent on my birthday. <i>(gift)</i>
p r e - S E N T	Allow me to pres-ENT my friend, David. <i>(introduce)</i>

produce

P R O - d u c e	They sell all kinds of PRO-duce at the market. <i>(fruit and vegetables)</i>
p r o - D U C E	How did the magician manage to pro-DUCE a rabbit from his top hat? <i>(bring out)</i>

protest

P R O - t e s t	There was a political PRO-test going on in the street. <i>(demonstration)</i>
p r o - T E S T	I had to pro-TEST about the dirty state of the kitchen. <i>(complain)</i>

recall

R E - c a l l	The actor was given a RE-call. <i>(called back, invited for a second audition)</i>
r e - C A L L	I can't re-CALL the first time I rode a bicycle. <i>(remember)</i>

record

R E - c o r d	She always keeps a RE-cord of what she spends every month. <i>(note)</i>
r e - C O R D	It's important to re-CORD how much you spend every month. <i>(make a note of)</i>

reject

RE - j e c t	The item in this box is a RE-ject. <i>(not good enough to sell)</i>
r e - J E C T	We have decided to re-JECT the building proposal as it would have cost too much money. <i>(turn down, say no to)</i>

suspect

S U S - p e c t	The police interviewed the SUS-pect for five hours, but then let him go. <i>(someone they thought might have committed a crime)</i>
s u s - P E C T	I sus-PECT that tree will have to be cut down, before it falls and causes some damage. <i>(have a feeling, think, imagine)</i>

2. CHANGE FROM NOUN TO VERB OR NOUN TO ADJECTIVE, DIFFERENT MEANING:

address

A D - d r e s s	Do you know Valen's AD-dress? <i>(where she lives)</i>
a d - D R E S S	You do not have permission to ad-DRESS President Harkonnen! <i>(to speak to him directly)</i>

attribute

A T - t r i b - u t e	Dishonesty is a common ATT-rib-ute of politicians. <i>(a trait/characteristic)</i>
a t - T R I B - u t e	That quote is at-TRIB-u-ted to Winston Churchill. <i>(considered to be first said/created by him)</i>

conduct

C O N - d u c t	We aren't happy about your general CON-duct. <i>(the way you're behaving)</i>
c o n - D U C T	I was asked to con-DUCT the orchestra at short notice. <i>(coordinate a musical performance by waving a baton)</i>

console

C O N - s o l e	I spend too much time at my computer CON-sole. <i>(screen and controls)</i>
c o n - S O L E	She was so unhappy, I was unable to con-SOLE her. <i>(make her feel better)</i>

content

C O N - t e n t	The CON-tent of your essay is fine, but you need to rearrange the structure. <i>(what it contains)</i>
c o n - T E N T (a d j .)	She was sitting reading a book, looking very con-TENT. <i>(relaxed, peaceful)</i>

converse

C O N - v e r s e	Do you think firm A is more successful than firm B? I think the CON-verse is true. <i>(opposite)</i>
c o n - V E R S E	He can con-VERSE in three different languages. <i>(have conversations)</i>

default

D E - f a u l t	The DE-fault settings of that TV are bad, but you can configure it differently. <i>(the settings it comes with it when you get it)</i>
d e - F A U L T	Jon de-FAULT-ed on his loan payments. <i>(he did not make the required payments)</i>

desert

D E S - e r t	The army marched through the DES-ert. <i>(eg Sahara)</i>
d e s - E R T	I wouldn't advise you to des-ERT the army, as it will get you into trouble. <i>(leave without permission)</i>

entrance

E N - t r a n c e	The EN-trance to the building was locked. <i>(way in)</i>
e n - T R A N C E	Are you trying to en-TRANCE me? <i>(hypnotise me, put me into a trance)</i>

exploit

E X - p l o i t	He's always talking about some EX-ploit from his war years. <i>(exciting experience, adventure)</i>
e x - P L O I T	Some companies ex-PLOIT their staff by expecting them to work overtime for no extra pay. <i>(take advantage of)</i>

extract

EX - t r a c t	She read me an EX-tract from her new novel. <i>(short section)</i>
e x - T R A C T	The dentist says he needs to ex-TRACT one of my teeth. <i>(remove, pull out, take out)</i>

invalid

IN - v a l - i d	After his accident he was an IN-val-id for nearly a year, but he's ok again now. <i>(was disabled, had mobility problems)</i>
i n - V A L - i d (a d j .)	I'm sorry, your passport is in-VAL-id, as it expired two months ago. <i>(can't be used)</i>

object

OB - j e c t	What is that OB-ject over there? <i>(thing)</i>
o b - J E C T	Would anyone ob-JECT if I opened a window? <i>(complain)</i>

project

PRO - j e c t	This PRO-ject should be completed next month. <i>(piece of work)</i>
p r o - J E C T	We could pro-JECT the film onto that blank wall. <i>(show, display)</i>

refuse

REF - u s e	We have our REF-use collected on a Thursday. <i>(rubbish, garbage)</i>
r e - F U S E	Chocolate cake? How can I re-FUSE! <i>(say no)</i>

subject

SUB - j e c t	What is the SUB-ject of today's lesson? <i>(topic)</i>
s u b - J E C T	Oh dear, our teacher is going to sub-JECT us to another test. <i>(impose on us, make us endure)</i>