What is the accent?

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines accent as a distinctive manner of expression.

a. An individual’s distinctive or characteristic inflection, tone, or choice of words.
b. A way of speaking typical of a particular group of people and especially of the natives or residents of a region.

While more simply, The Cambridge Dictionary of American English defines accent as “the way in which people in a particular area or country pronounce words.”
What is the accent and why is it important?

In words with 2 or more syllables, one of those syllables will be stressed or emphasized. This is important for:

- Reading (decoding and pronunciation)
- Spelling
- Fluency (oral and silent)
- Vocabulary

To correct an Englishman’s pronunciation is to imply that he is not quite a gentleman.

-George Bernard Shaw

Building Awareness through Phonological Awareness

- ABC’s
- He is sick.
- He is sick.
- He is sick.

- Call the dog.
- Stop.
- Stop?
- Stop!

- Light housekeeping
- Lighthouse keeping
Dictionaries

1755 - *Dictionary of the English Language*, Samuel Johnson

- Order of Consideration
  - Orthography
  - Pronunciation
  - Etymology
  - Morphology
  - Syntax
  - Collocation (multiple usages)
  - Meaning

The Schwa Sound

- A reduced vowel sound in unaccented syllables.
- Most common sound in English
- Sounds like "uh" or even "L"
- The schwa sound can be found in an open, closed, r-controlled, and c + le syllable.
- All vowels can make this sound:

  - vit@min
  - c@ndition
  - @lectric
  - s@port
  - exper@ment
  - anal@sis

Schwa, Dictionaries, and Gillingham

- “In many words, pronunciation of the vowels in the final syllables has disappeared completely and the old rules of syllable division no longer apply. Loss of the basic phonetic spelling is creating a hopeless memory load for poor spellers.”

- Jane McColland, “Gillingham Contemporary after 75 years.” 1989
But accenting can bring back the phonetic clues!

“The spelling of the morphemes is constant, but the pronunciation of the morphemes varies.”

-Louisa Moats, “How Spelling Supports Reading; And Why It Is More Regular and Predictable Than You May Think”

- *d*_{ə}fine ---&gt; def*ə*ni*ʃ*ion
- symb*ə*l ---&gt; symb*ə*lic
- val*ə*d ---&gt; val*ə*di*ʃ*y

When to begin

➢ As students begin to divide two syllable words and build words with affixes, they need to be taught about accent and schwa.
  • VCCV
➢ There are seven rules that govern where the accent is on English words.
➢ The first one you teach students is that the accent usually falls on the root!

All Seven Rules

* See handout for further description.

| Rule I: | 1st syllable; root |
| Rule II: | -ie, -ical, -ity & Latin suffixes -tion, -sion, -cial, etc. |
| Rule III: | Silent e, count back 3. |
| Rule IV: | Connectives |
| Rule V: | Nouns and verbs |
| Rule VI: | -oon and -eer |
| Rule VII: | -ia |
Rule I - Part 1

We usually accent the first syllable of a two syllable word.

bonnet

devil

tuna

cruel

Rule I - Part 2

We usually accent a root and not a prefix or a suffix

selfish

repair

unhelpful

flavorless
### 2-1-1 Doubling Rule

In a multisyllabic word ending in 1 consonant and 1 short vowel with the accent on the final syllable, double the final consonant when adding a vowel suffix.

***Think of this as an extension of the 1-1-1 with an accented syllable***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>begin</td>
<td>-ing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forbid</td>
<td>-en</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travel</td>
<td>-ed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commit</td>
<td>-ment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Word Origins - Germanic or Romance?

-Because English is a layered language beginning with its Germanic roots, we have to take into account the stress patterns of word’s origins.

- Germanic words
- French words
- Latin words
You cannot be rigid with syllable types and syllable division.

You need to find a balance between phonology, morphology, and etymology.

---

**Rule V**

*When the same word can be a noun or a verb,*
Nouns accents the prefix; verbs accents the root.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>conduct</th>
<th>conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>produce</td>
<td>produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>address</td>
<td>address</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rule II - Part 1

Accent the syllable before -ic, -ical, & -ity

domestic

historical

festivity

Latin Suffixes with -ci-, -si-, -ti-, or -xi-construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>consonant</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>suffix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ejec) t</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(offi) c</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>al</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pa) t</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>ent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Container Rule

Long and strong:

a, o, & u

Wimpy:

i

Rule II - Part 2

Accent the syllable before suffixes that begin with -ci, -si, -ti, & -xi.

- racial
- confession
- construction
- complexion
- magician
- version
- initial
- anxious
### Connectives i, u, ul, & ol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Connective</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mater</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>al</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virt</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>ous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pend</td>
<td>ul</td>
<td>ul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sounds of the connective i

**Connective i**

- When before a vowel suffix, the sound is “ē.”
- When before a consonant suffix, the sound is “ī” (or “uh”).
- When following an l or n, the sound is “y.”
Rule IV

Accent the syllable before a connective *i, u or ul.*

obedient
familiar
ambiguous
perpendicular

Rule VI

Accent the suffixes *–oon* and *–eer.*
pioneer
volunteer
balloon
pantaloon
## Rule VII

**Accent the syllable before –ia.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Accent Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dyslexia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petunia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hysteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Assimilated Prefixes

Prefixes that change spelling to match the root. The change happens for euphony.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix Transformation</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adversity ----&gt; attribute</td>
<td>attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>committee ----&gt; corruption</td>
<td>corruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See handout for full deck.
Rule III

In words of three or more syllables which end in silent e, count back three syllables and accent. (Don’t forget c +le!)

- ultimate
- sensitive
- spectacle
- destructible

Language is more fashion than science, and matters of usage, spelling and pronunciation tend to wander around like hemlines.

-Bill Bryson
**ACCENTING RULES REFERENCE**

**Rule I:** We usually accent the first syllable of a two syllable word. We usually accent a root and not a prefix or a suffix

| self'ish | de rail' | pre cau'tion |

**Rule II:** Accent the syllable before these suffixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-ic</th>
<th>-ci-</th>
<th>-cian</th>
<th>-cious</th>
<th>-cient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ical</td>
<td>-si-</td>
<td>-sion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ity</td>
<td>-ti-</td>
<td>-tion</td>
<td>-tious</td>
<td>-tient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-xi-</td>
<td>-xion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rule III:** In words of three or more syllables which end in silent e, count back three syllables and accent. If it ends in consonant + le, count the last e.

| dif'ference | syl'able |

**Rule IV:** Accent the syllable before a connective i, u or ul.

| ex per'ienced | e val’u ate | reg’ular |

**Rule V:** When the same word can be a noun or a verb,

- noun accents the prefix.
- verb accents the root.

| con’duct (noun) | con duct’ (verb) |

**Rule VI:** Accent the suffixes -oon and -eer.

| buf fool'n | pi o neer’ |

**Rule VII:** Accent the syllable before -ia.

| Cal i for’ ni a | sub ur’ bi a |
ACCENTING RULE II
Underline the vowel sounds. Then, divide, and accent the following words. Read them aloud.

Accenting Rule II - Accent the syllable before these suffixes:

-ic
-ical
-ity

Latin suffixes that begin with -
-ci-
-si-
-ti-
-xi-

curiosity magician revision

sympathetic propulsion historical

fanatical initial abrasion

official vicious noxious

Extension questions -

1. Row 1 - Which word “killed the cat?”; explain that saying.
2. Row 2: Which word is a noun?
3. Row 3: Use the word initial in two ways.
4. Row 4: Why does the word official use -cial as a suffix and not -tial?
5. Column 1: What part of speech is sympathetic? Change the suffix to make it a verb?
6. Column 2: Which word has a prefix that means forward?
7. Column 3: Use the word abrasion in a context rich sentence.
8. Complete the analogy with any word above - devotee : fanatical : : cruel : ___________
Extra Practice Accenting
(Accent and write the Roman Numeral for the rule that applies)

1. gradual 17. activity
2. Ethiopia 18. stimulant
3. dinnerless 19. automatic
4. parachute 20. object
5. escort 21. intelligence
6. privateer 22. sanitarium
7. volunteer 23. cheerfulness
8. political 24. solarium
9. librarian 25. ambitious
10. ridiculous 26. Columbia
11. decrease 27. preservative
12. project 28. permit
13. infinitive 29. cartoon
14. ascension 30. flavorless
15. nameless 31. suburbia
16. electrocute 32. geophysical
Extra Practice Accenting - KEY
Accented syllable is in bold and capitalized

1. **GRAD** ual (IV)  
   16. e **LECT** rocute (III)

2. Ethi **O** pia (VII)  
   17. ac **TIV** ity (II)

3. **DIN** nerless (I)  
   18. **STIM** ulant (IV)

4. **PAR** achute (III)  
   19. auto **MAT** ic (II)

5. escort (V) - **ES** cort; **esCORT**  
   20. Object (V) - **OBJ** ect; obj**ECT**

6. privat **EER** (VI)  
   21. in **TEL** ligence (III)

7. volunt **EER** (VI)  
   22. sani **TAR** ium (IV)

8. Po **LIT** ical (II)  
   23. **CHEER** fulness (I)

9. Li **BRAR** ian (IV)  
   24. so **LAR** ium (IV)

10. ri **DIC** ulous (IV)  
    25. am **BI** tious (II)

11. decrease (V) - **DE** crease; de**CREASE**  
    26. Co **LUM** bia (VII)

12. project (V) - **PROJ** ect; pro**JECT**  
    28. permit- (V) - **PERmit**; per**MIT**

13. In **FIN** itive (III)  
    29. car **TOON** (VI)

14. as **CEN** sion (II)  
    30. **FLA** vorless (I)

15. **NAME** less (I)  
    31. su **BUR** bia (VII)