

Emphasis

When a primary stress does not fall on the expected word – neither on the last new-information content word, nor on the last new-information function word, nor on explicit contrasts – then there’s a good chance that the speaker intends some kind of emphasis.

Emphatic stress cannot be predicted, while normal contrast stress can be predicted. Most types of emphatic stress highlight an **implicit** contrast with something unspoken but understood. Often the unspoken contrast has the opposite meaning.

- a. *Mark the normal stress of each item in the left-hand box.*
- b. *Then compare the normal stress with the stress marked on the same item in the right-hand box.*
- c. *Discuss with your partner(s): What do you think the speaker meant by using this particular stress?*
- d. *AFTER discussing, look at the back of this page.*

1. Two friends talking about local political races

<p>A. With all his backing, Arthur could run for mayor.</p> <p>B. In my opinion, he should run for mayor. We need a new one.</p>	<p>A. With <i>á</i>ll his backing, Arthur could run for <i>ma</i>yor.</p> <p>B. In <i>m</i>y opinion, he <i>sh</i>ould run for mayor. We <i>ne</i>ed a new one.</p>
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2. Two sisters *window-shopping in town

<p>A. Now there’s an attractive dress. It has no sleeves no belt, and very few pleats across the front.</p> <p>B. It’s quite nice, for a woman with a tiny waist.</p> <p>A. Oh, be quiet!</p>	<p>A. Now <i>th</i>ere’s an attractive dress. It has <i>n</i>ó sleeves, <i>n</i>ó belt. And <i>v</i>ery few pleats across the front.</p> <p>B. It’s <i>q</i>uite nice, for a woman with a <i>t</i>iny waist.</p> <p>A. Oh, be <i>q</i>u<i>ie</i>t!</p>
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3. A fellow talking about his sister

<p>When my sister first went to Europe, she took ten suitcases and five *carry-ons! She had everything she wanted, but she also had to deal with all that luggage once she arrived. That taught her an extremely valuable lesson: Travel light!</p>	<p>When my sister <i>f</i>irst went to Europe, she took <i>t</i>én suitcases and <i>f</i>ive *carry-ons! She had <i>é</i>verything she wanted, but she also had to <i>d</i>éal with all that luggage once she <i>arr</i>ived. That taught her an <i>é</i>xtrémely valuable lesson: Travel <i>l</i>ight!</p>
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*compound noun

If we knew the speakers and their background, we could interpret their emphatic meaning better, but even without knowing the speakers, emphatic stress (underlined below) usually communicates a clear meaning. We distinguish 'emphatic stress' from 'normal stress.' Normal means that stress follows regular prediction rules for signaling new information and contrast.

1.

<p>A. With <u>á</u>ll his backing, Arthur could run for máyor.</p> <p>B. In <u>m</u>y opinion, he should run for mayor. We <u>neé</u>d a new one.</p>	<p>Emphasizing extensive, not ordinary support Normal stress - new information</p> <p>Speaking for myself, and no one else. Normal stress - contrast with 'could'</p> <p>Emphasizing urgency, not customary need</p>
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2.

<p>A. Now <u>thé</u>re's an attractive dress. It has <u>nó</u> sleeves, <u>nó</u> belt. And <u>véry</u> few pleats across the front.</p> <p>B. It's <u>quí</u>te nice, for a woman with a <u>tí</u>ny waist.</p> <p>A. Oh, be <u>quí</u>et!</p>	<p>A particular, visible location, not elsewhere Versus having sleeves Versus having a belt Versus having many pleats Not just 'nice' but especially so Versus a large waist, perhaps like A's Normal stress - new information</p>
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3.

<p>When my sister <u>fí</u>rst went to Europe, she took <u>tén</u> suitcases and <u>fí</u>ve *carry-ons! She had <u>é</u>verything she wanted, but she also had to déal with all that luggage once she arríved. That taught her an <u>extrémely</u> valuable lesson: Travel líght!</p>	<p>Emphasizing the first time, not other times Exaggeration? = excessive, not normal Exaggeration? = excessive, not normal Emphasizing not lacking anything at all Normal stress - new information</p> <p>Normal stress - new information Not of ordinary value but of very great value</p> <p>Normal stress - new information</p>
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