

Syllabic Stress - General Principles

BASIC PRINCIPLE The primary stress in a German word generally falls on the stem syllable of the word. For nearly all examples, this means that the first syllable in a native, unprefixed, German word carries the stress.

nehmen	NEH men	arbeiten	AR bei ten
sehen	SEH en	öffentlich	ÖF fent lich
sagen	SA gen	Aberglaube	A ber glau be
fahren	FAH ren	dolmetschen	DOL met schen

UNSTRESSED PREFIXES Some prefixes in German are always unstressed. In instances where a word begins with an unstressed prefix, the stress falls on the stem syllable of the word.

benehmen	be NEH men	erfahren	er FAH ren
versehen	ver SEH en	veröffentlichen	ver ÖF fent lich en
entsagen	ent SA gen	zerstören	zer STÖ ren
bearbeiten	be AR bei ten	gedolmetscht	ge DOL metscht

STRESSED PREFIXES Some prefixes in German are always stressed. In instances where a word begins with a stressed prefix, the stress moves away from the stem syllable and onto the prefix. However, in such instances, where the vowel in the originally stressed syllable was long, that vowel still maintains its length even though it loses its stress. The underlined syllables are UNSTRESSED but contain LONG vowels.

einnehmen	EIN <u>n e h</u> men	einarbeiten	EIN arbeiten
ansehen	AN <u>s e h</u> en	Zuschauer	ZU schauer
ausfahren	AUS <u>f a h</u> ren	mitkommen	MIT kommen
absagen	AB <u>s a</u> gen	hinreisen	HIN reisen

PREFIXES WITH VARIABLE STRESS Some prefixes in German have variable stress. That is, these prefixes are sometimes stressed and sometimes unstressed. The stress patterns of words formed from these prefixes have to be memorized.

Umkreis	UM kreis	umkreisen	um KREI sen
Übergang	Ü ber gang	übersetzen	über SET zen
durchkommen	DURCH kom men	durchmessen	durch MES sen
missfarben	MISS far ben	missachten	miss ACH ten

RARITIES Only a very few, native, unprefixed, German words take their stress on a syllable other than the first.

Wacholder	Wa CHOL der	Berlin	Ber LIN
Holunder	Ho LUN der	Hannover	Han NO ver

FOREIGN WORDS Non-native words in German have unpredictable stress patterns. These are called *Fremdwörter*. Generally, these words take syllabic stress on a syllable other than the first.

Fabrik	Fa BRIK	Monopol	Mo no POL
Pistole	Pis TO le	Matheus	Ma THE us
Ministerium	Mi ni STE rium	Jubiläum	Ju bi LÄ um