

# Focusing on Stress to Improve Note-taking Efficiency TASKS

## Academic Listening – Note-taking

Note-taking is one of the most important skills when actively participating in a lecture. By focusing on the lecturer's stress, you can identify which parts of their lecture are relevant and important for you to take notes on.

### Task 1: Introduction

Say the two sentences below aloud and count how many seconds each takes.

a) *The beautiful mountain appeared transfixed in the distance.*

b) *He can come on Sundays as long as he doesn't have to do any homework in the evening.*

Time required?

Wait a minute! If the first sentence is much shorter than the second sentence, how can the timing be the same? (don't forget to ask your ASK Tutor!)

Because English is...

**Task 2** Look at the different types of words below and decide which would be stressed in English and which unstressed?

- Conjunctions e.g. but, while, as
- Pronouns e.g. they, she, us
- Nouns e.g. kitchen, Peter
- Verbs e.g. visit, construct
- Auxiliary verbs e.g. don't, am, can, were

f. Adjectives e.g. beautiful, interesting g. Adverbs e.g. often, carefully h. Prepositions e.g. before, next to, opposite i. Determiners e.g. the, a, some, a few	
<b>Stressed words</b>	<b>Unstressed words</b>

Content words are words which carry meaning. These tend to be stressed words. Non-stressed words tend to be function words. NB The more a word is stressed, the more important the speaker deems it to be.

**Task 3:** Speak through the following sentences trying to carefully pronounce EVERY word. Notice how unnatural this sounds. Next, focus on speaking the sentences stressing only content words. Record yourself doing this and listen back. Use your teacher as a model where necessary.

- By the time he receives this letter, I will have caught the train to Paris.
- Following closely behind the herd was a group of filthy, disgusting vultures.
- I'll make sure to give him a ring the next time I'm in town.
- Not only are the exams required, but they are also absolutely imperative for your further education.
- Hey, have you seen the new film with Ryan Gosling? You know, the one where he plays a club manager in Bangkok?

**How can this help your note-taking? By attuning your ears to pay attention to stressed words. These are the words the speaker deems key.**

**Task 4** Go to the MICASE website (link is on the ASK webpage) and choose any lecture you find interesting. Listen for 5 minutes maximum. Identify which words the speaker stresses. Then, find another lecture by a different lecturer and compare how different speakers make stress.