



Word Stress

The English language, like many others, is made up of an **alphabet**



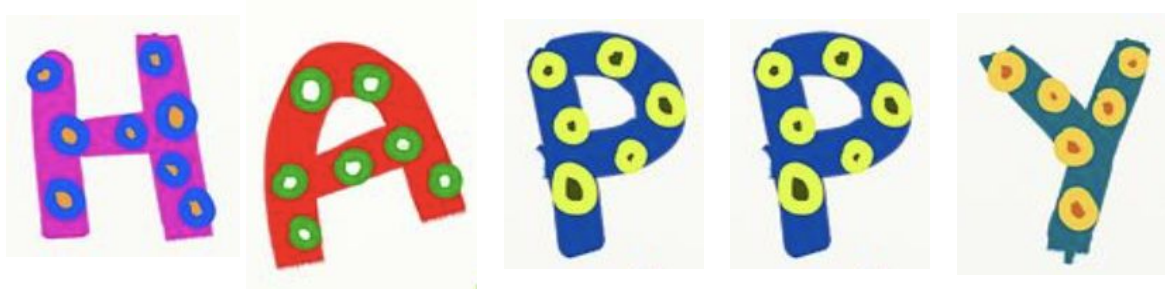
The English alphabet has 26 letters



When we put these letters together we get a
word



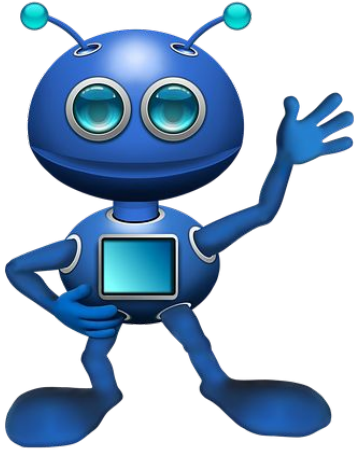
When we say a word out loud, we group certain letters together into small units of sound. These are called **syllables**.



When we say this word “happy”, we have 2 units of sound (2 syllables). HA is one unit and PPY is the second unit.



The easiest way to identify the number of syllables in a word is talking like a robot



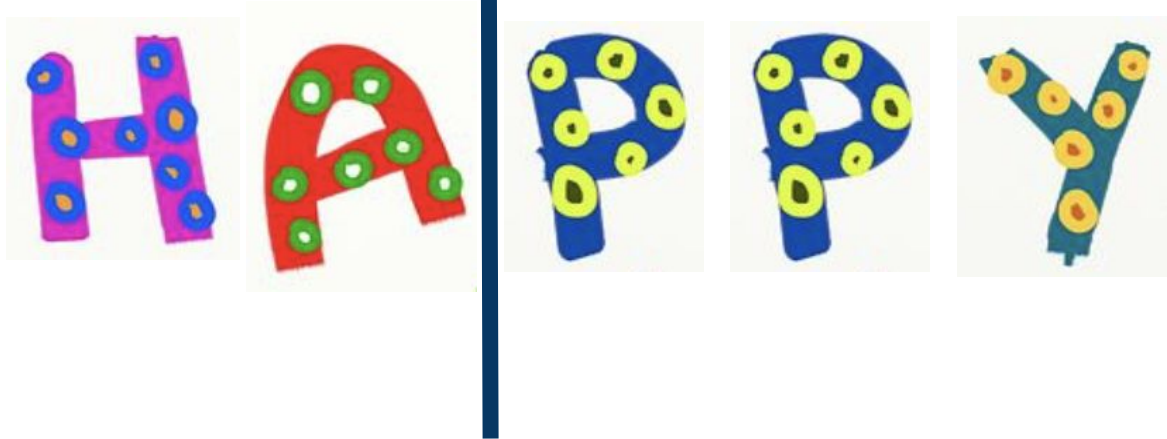
English is a **stress-timed language** and this means that only one individual syllable can be the most important part in a word

To ensure that people know which syllable is the most important part, we add **stress** and emphasis to it

To stress something in English, we need to:

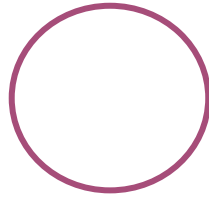
- Make a longer sound
- Make a louder sound
- Use a higher pitch
- Make a clearer and more enunciated sound
- Use more facial movement

If we return to our example of “happy”, the most important syllable is the first one, HA, so we need to stress this part. We don’t stress the second syllable, PPY.

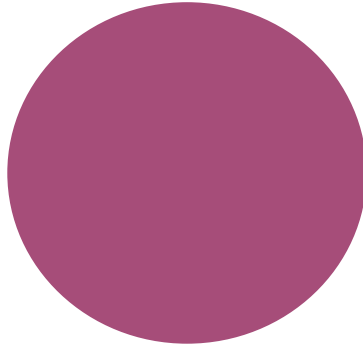


When we teach sentence stress at Virtually Fluent, we use stress bubbles to help you identify the stressed part of a word

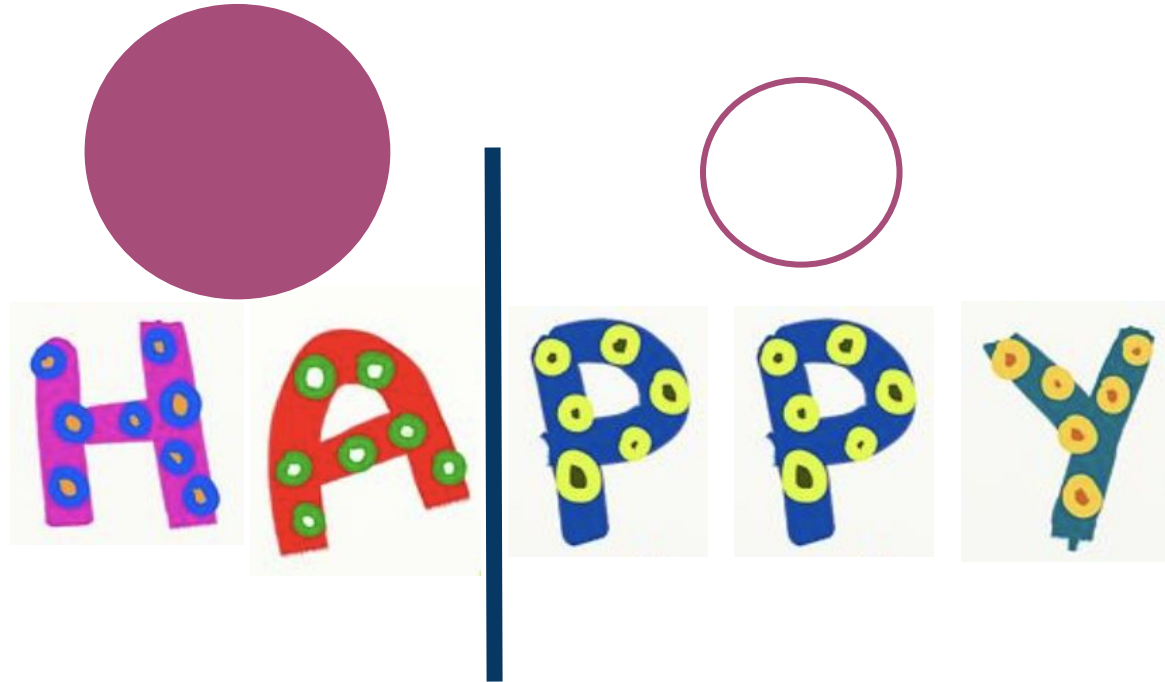
We use a small transparent bubble to say that a syllable is not stressed



And we use a big pink bubble to say that a syllable is stressed



If we demonstrate this with the word “happy”, the stress bubbles would look like this...



Please be aware that every English teacher, dictionary and online explanation may represent stress in a different way, so always read the key first when reviewing this pronunciation topic

There are lots of rules and patterns that can help us decide where the stress goes in a word.

Watch the explanation videos to find out more.