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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Vocabulary

### Word stress



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*NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Catherine**

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. I'm Catherine...

**Finn**

And I'm Finn. Catherine, look at this photo – do you like it? I took it this morning.

**Catherine**

Wow, Finn. That's not bad. I didn't know you were into photography.

**Finn**

Well, I love taking photographs.

**Catherine**

Really? Well funnily enough, the words **photography** and **photograph** are good examples of today's topic, which is word stress. We're going to look at the way word stress can change in words that come from the same root word.

**Finn**

We'll show you how to work out the stress of these words...

**Catherine**

There'll be a quiz...

**Finn**

And we'll leave you with a top tip for learning vocabulary.

**Catherine**

But first, let's listen to John. He's a **photographer**, which is a person who takes photos as a job. He's talking about his latest project.

**Finn**

Here's a question to think about while you listen: what's John's project?

**INSERT**

**John**

The book is a collection of photographs of my father. He studied **geography** as a young man and went all over the world during his career. He visited some very interesting **geographic** locations – the Andes, the Sahara – beautiful places. The book's like a **photographic** record of his life – a kind of a **biography** in pictures.

**STING**

**Finn**

So, that's John. We asked you: what was his project?

**Catherine**

And the answer is: a biography.

**Finn**

A biography is the story of someone's life – usually a book.

**Catherine**

But, John's a photographer, so he told the story of his father's life in photographs. Let's hear a clip.

**INSERT | CLIP |**

He studied geography as a young man...

**Finn**

John's dad was interested in geography: the study of the physical features of the earth. And geography is a key word in today's show because of its stress.

**Catherine**

Yes. Now, geography has four syllables, ge-o-gra-phy, and the stress falls on the third syllable from the end. Geography, not **geography**, **geography** or **geography**. It's **geography**.

**Finn**

Words that end in the letters p-h-y - pronounced 'fee' - usually have this stress pattern. Like **biography** and **photography**. Do you like **photography**, Catherine?

**Catherine**

To be honest, not really.

**Finn**

Not really? Sorry to hear that.

**Catherine**

No, never mind. Anyway, these words – like **geography**, **biography** and **photography** - are all nouns. We can change them to adjectives, by changing the y at the end to i-c – pronounced

'ik'. And when we do this, the word stress moves to a different place in the word. Here's John again.

### INSERT 1 CLIP 2

He studied **geography** as a young man [...] He visited some very interesting **geographic** locations...

#### Catherine

Did you hear the difference? When we say adjectives that end with i-c, the stress falls on the penultimate syllable, that's the syllable just before the last one. So it's **geography**, but **geographic**.

#### Finn

Geography, **geographic**. And we have photography, pho-to-**graph**-ic...

#### Catherine

And there are other words like **dramatic**, to do with theatre and drama; **alphabetic**, to do with the alphabet, and **artistic**, to describe things to do with art. Finn, are you artistic?

#### Finn

Well, I like to think of myself as quite artistic, yes. And Catherine, what's the most interesting geographic location you've been to?

#### Catherine

It's a lovely place in Turkey called Ölüdeniz.

### IDENT

You're listening to BBC Learning English.

#### Finn

And we're talking about word stress. We've looked at the stress patterns of words that end with p-h-y, like **photography**.

#### Catherine

And words ending with i-c, like **photographic**.

#### Finn

And now, it's time for a quiz. Choose the correct pronunciation for the words in these sentences. Catherine will tell you the answers. Ready? Number 1. I like reading books about famous people. I love a good a) **biography**, b) **biography** or c) **biography**?

#### Catherine

And it's b) **biography**.

**Finn**

Well done if you got that right. Number 2. 'The police arrested him when they found ... a) photographic evidence, b) photographic evidence or c) photog**raph**ic evidence.'

**Catherine**

And the answer is - c) photog**raph**ic evidence.

**Finn**

And that's the end of the quiz – well done if you got them all right.

**Catherine**

And that almost brings us to the end of the programme.

**Finn**

But before we go, here's today's top tip for learning vocabulary: if you use an online dictionary, you can usually hear an audio recording of a word's pronunciation. Listen carefully to the word stress and try to copy it.

**Catherine**

Top tip, Finn.

**Finn**

Thank you.

**Catherine**

There's more about this at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

**Both**

Bye!

## Vocabulary points to take away

**Word stress** is when you pronounce a particular syllable of a word more strongly than the other syllables in the word. It is important to get the stress right. Speaking with the wrong word stress can make your English sound unnatural.

For example, when you say the word 'photograph', which has three syllables, you say it with the stress on the first syllable. You say **photograph**, not *photograph* or *photograph*.

In the dictionary, word stress is shown like this:

photograph - /'fəʊtəgrɑ:f/

The ' before the /f/ sound shows us that the stress is on the first syllable: **photograph**.

We can also show the stress pattern of a particular word by drawing a diagram like this:

photograph

And with these diagrams we can show how word stress patterns change in words that come from the same root word:

photograph

photography

photographic

Stress on the third syllable from the end	Stress on the penultimate syllable (4-syllable words)	Stress on the penultimate syllable (3-syllable words)
o O o o	o o O o	o O o
biography geography photography	alphabetic biographic geographic photographic	artistic dramatic