

Clap the Stress!

Level: All

Age: 8-12

Organization: whole class

Aims: To practise word (or sentence) stress; to raise awareness of the importance of stress in pronouncing English intelligibly; to improve pronunciation skills.

Language focus: any, depending on the words or sentences chosen

Materials: *Essential:* none / *Optional:* a percussion instrument

Procedure

1. Draw two sets of circles on the board to reflect the word stress patterns you wish to practise, e.g. 1. Ooo 2. oOo.
2. Clap the rhythm for each one (or use a drum or other percussion instrument) and get the children to join in clapping loudly on the stressed syllable, and softly on the other two.
3. Explain that words with more than one syllable have the stress on different syllables and that people understand us more easily if we say the stress correctly. You may like to demonstrate this by saying a word in the children's own language with the wrong stress which they may find difficult to understand.
4. Elicit or give two examples of words which have the stress patterns you want to practise, e.g. 1 Ooo *elephant* 2oOo *Banana* and get the children to clap the rhythm and say the words.
5. Divide the class in half and assign one stress pattern to each half.
6. Explain that you are going to say a series of words and that the children should repeat the word and clap the rhythm if it has their stress pattern. Examples of words you can use are: *telephone, tomato, hamburger, Saturday, December, computer, cinema, grandfather, pajamas.*
7. Children can then change roles and repeat the activity with different words.
8. At the end, ask the children to write a list of the words in their notebooks, and mark the stress.

Comments and suggestions:

- The words you use in the activity should be familiar to the children.
- Other word stress patterns you may wish to practise are, e.g. two syllable words with patterns Oo as in button or oO as in report.

- Children can also repeat and clap the stress in sentences or questions you say, e.g. *Where's the ball?* / *It's time for lunch*. Or in rhymes and chants (see section 6)
- Through clapping the rhythm of word and sentence stress, children develop awareness of this feature of pronunciation. With older children, it may also be appropriate to draw their attention to how stress patterns in English may be different from their own language.