

# Word Stress Summary

*Every word in English has at least one syllable.*

*Every word in English also has one syllable that is stressed or emphasized.*

Every language has its own unique rhythm or beat. When you learn a second language, such as English, you naturally apply the sounds & rhythm of your first language to your second language (English). This will make you sound “accented”.

It's when you use the correct rhythm of English, then native speakers will understand you the best.

**The combination of stressed & unstressed syllables creates the rhythm of English.**

**Syllables** are the way we break apart words into pieces. Every word in English can be broken into 1 or more syllables. A syllable is a part of a word that always has 1 vowel sound and sometimes 1 or more consonant around it.

1 syllable words: work, day, go, night.

2 syllable words: a-gain, en-ter, dan-ger, to-day

3 syllable words: com-pu-ter, es-ti-mate, pho-to-graph

4 syllable words: bi-o-lo-gist, he-li-co-pter, e-con-no-my

5 syllable words: con-gra-tu-la-tions, in-sig-ni-fi-cant, sa-tis-fa-cto-ry

**Stress** is saying a word or part of a word longer, louder, with a higher pitch, and full pronunciation.

**Every word has at least one syllable & every word also has one syllable that is stressed.**

Many misunderstandings occur when you either do not stress a syllable in a word or you stress the wrong syllable in a word. You might be pronouncing the sounds correctly but if you do not stress the correct syllable, you will be misunderstood.

How do you know which syllable to stress?

- Review the basic rules of word stress on this summary & the Word Stress Rules worksheet
- Listen closely to native speakers & see if you can copy their stress pattern



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# Word Stress Worksheet

*The combination of stressed & unstressed syllables creates the rhythm of English.*

## Syllables:

*How many syllables do you hear in these words?*

1. Eraser \_\_\_\_\_
2. Fascination \_\_\_\_\_
3. command \_\_\_\_\_
4. Tomorrow \_\_\_\_\_
5. Pajamas \_\_\_\_\_
6. chair \_\_\_\_\_
7. arrive \_\_\_\_\_
8. dictionary \_\_\_\_\_
9. begin \_\_\_\_\_
10. beautiful \_\_\_\_\_

*Which syllable am I saying longer, louder, and with a slightly higher pitch? (circle it)*

1. pro-ject
2. a-rrive
3. ho-li-day
4. dis-co-ver
5. e-co-no-mic
6. Pho-to-gra-phy
7. lip-stick
8. To-day
9. gra-du-a-tion
10. rain-bow

## Practice Words:

1. com**MAND**
2. dem**O**cracy
3. **YES**terday
4. indi**VI**dual
5. **P**illow
6. **SUIT**case
7. him**SELF**
8. e**VENT**
9. **A**ccess
10. a**MER**ican



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# Basic Rules of Word Stress

## 1. 2 syllable words:

- **Noun:** stress falls on the first syllable.
- **Verb:** stress falls on the second syllable.

Examples: **Nouns:** TEAcher, PENcil, LANguage  
**Verbs:** beGIN, aRRIVE, seLECT

## 2. Heteronym words: words spelled exactly the same but have two different meanings depending on the way you stress it.

- **Noun:** stress falls on the first syllable.
- **Verb:** stress falls on the second syllable.

<u>Noun</u>	<u>Verb</u>
address	<b>address</b>
<b>conflict</b>	conflict
<b>contest</b>	contest
<b>contrast</b>	contrast
<b>desert</b>	<b>desert</b> (which has the same pronunciation as 'dessert')
<b>incline</b>	<b>incline</b>

## 3. Stress in **Compound Nouns:** always stress the **first** word.

Compound noun = 2 or more nouns combined to form a single noun.

Ex: **MAIL**box, **BLACK**bird, **TREE**house, **MOTHER**-in-law

## 4. Stress in **Proper Nouns:** if it's a two word name, stress the **second** word.

Proper Noun = one-of-a-kind item and is always spelled with a capital letter.

Ex: New **YORK**, San **FRANCISCO**, Mickey **MOUSE**

## 5. **Acronyms:** stress the **last letter**.

Acronym = a letter is used to represent a longer name.

Ex: **FBI**, **IRS**, **CPA**, **UN**

(See worksheet for more practice)



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# Basic Word Stress Rules Practice

## 2 syllable words

- noun - 1st syllable stress
- verbs - 2nd syllable stress

### Practice Words:

1. TEAcher
2. PENcil
3. beGIN
4. LANguage
5. aRRIVE
6. seLECT
7. ENGLISH
8. CAMera
9. deCIDE
10. reLAX

**Heteronym Words:** (practice saying these words with the correct stress)

Noun	Ruden Phonetics	Verb	Ruden Phonetics
Address	/a dress/	aDDRESS	/u dress/
CONflict	/con flikt/	conFLICT	/cun flikt/
CONtest	/con test/	conTEST	/cun test/
CONtrast	/con trast/	conTRAST	/cun trast/
DEsert	/de zert/	deSERT	/dE zert/
INcline	/in klIn/	inCLINE	/in klIn/
INcrease	/in krees/	inCREASE	/in krees/
INsult	/in sult/	inSULT	/in sult/
OBject	/ob dgekt/	obJECT	/ub jekt/
PERmit	/per mit/	perMIT	/per mit/
PREsent	/pre zint/	preSENT	/prE zent/
PROgress	/pro gres/	proGRESS	/pru gres/
PROtest	/prO test/	proTEST	/pru test/



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Noun	Ruden Phonetics	Verb	Ruden Phonetics
<b>RE</b> bel	/re bul/	re <b>BEL</b>	/rE beul/
<b>RE</b> cord	/re kerd/	re <b>CORD</b>	/rE kOrd/
<b>SUB</b> ject	/sub dgekt/	sub <b>JECT</b>	/sub jekt/
<b>SUR</b> vey	/ser vA/	sur <b>VEY</b>	/ser vA/
<b>SUS</b> pect	/sus pekt/	sus <b>PECT</b>	/sus pekt/

### Heteronym Words Practice Paragraph:

The professor refused to speak on the **CON**flict in the Saudi Arabian **DE**sert and the **PRO**gress the **RE**bels were making there. It would be in violation of her **CON**tract with the University's head administrators who did not want any more students to pro**TEST** our country's involvement in the foreign **CON**flict. Especially not on campus. **PRO**tests on campus would pro**JECT** an image in **CON**trast to what the administrative and public relations department would like for the small, private university.

### Ruden Phonetics: *stressed syllable bolded*

professor:	/prufeser/		
Saudi Arabian:	/sodee ar <b>A</b> beein/	or	"sodee a ray be in"
violation:	/viul <b>A</b> shun/	or	"viulayshun"
University:	/Univer <b>s</b> idee/	or	"you niver city"
Administrator:	/administr <b>A</b> der/	or	"admini stray der"
foreign:	/for <b>i</b> n/		
especially:	/uspeshulee/		
administrative:	/administr <b>A</b> div/		
public relations:	/publik reel <b>A</b> shunz/	or	"publik reelayshunz"
department:	/deepar <b>t</b> mint/		



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**Compound Nouns:** *stress the first word or part of the word*

1. **Black**bird
2. **Tree**house
3. **Mail**box
4. **Dog**house
5. **drive**way
6. **freeze**-dry
7. **over**-ripe
8. **2**-year-old
9. **wall**paper
10. **grass**hopper

**Compound Noun Practice Paragraph:**

My neighbor Tina's house is perfect! It has everything you could ever dream of! Her house has a huge **living** room, **family** room, **dining** room, and even a **recreation** room in the basement with a **pool** table, **foosball**, and **air** hockey. She also has an **exercise** room with great **exercise** equipment, a **tanning** bed, and an **indoor** heated **swimming** pool. The best part is her beautiful **rose** garden and **apple** orchard. I'm really glad we are friends.

**Proper Nouns:** *if it's a two or three word name, stress the last part of the name*

1. New **York** or New York **City**
2. San **Francisco**
3. Mickey **Mouse**
4. University of **Oregon**
5. Mrs. **Smith**
6. Statue of **Liberty**
7. Civil **War**
8. Queen of **England**
9. Mt. **Everest**
10. Taj **Mahal**

**Proper Noun Practice Paragraph:**

Larry and Anna **Proust** live in New York **City** with their children Jeff, Lucy, and Emma. Larry's grandparents, Nina and Marcus **Proust**, immigrated from Europe to America. After a long voyage on the Atlantic **Ocean**, their first sight of America was the Statue of **Liberty**. After landing at Ellis **Island**, they settled in New York **City**. To this day the Proust family continues to live in New York **City** also known as the Big **Apple**.



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**Acronyms:** *stress the last letter*

1. **FBI**
2. **IRS**
3. **CPA**
4. **TGIF**
5. **UPS**
6. **ABC**
7. **US**
8. **PTA**
9. **SAT**
10. **UN**

**Acronym Practice Paragraph:**

The **UPS** or United Postal Service uses a lot of abbreviations in their work. For example words like street, avenue, road, and boulevard are usually abbreviated as **St.**, **Ave.**, **Rd.**, and **Blvd.** in addresses. Because most state names are long, they are also abbreviated. Most states have very easy abbreviations, for example Texas is **TX** and Tennessee is **TN**. However Connecticut's abbreviated name is **CT** and the abbreviation for Maine is **ME**.



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## Advanced Word Stress Rules: Prefix & Suffix

*The syllable that gets stressed in a word depends mostly on the prefix and suffix of the root word.*

Here are the rules that tell you which syllable to stress.

### Prefix: word beginning

When a word has a prefix, generally the stress will fall on the 1st syllable of the base word.

a**W**ARD

sur**P**RISE

un**H**EALTHy

pro**P**OSAL

a**S**LEEP

in**C**REDible

ob**T**AIN

de**C**LARE

for**G**ET

\*\*\*Exception: When a word with a prefix acts as a noun, then it is treated like a noun compound and the stress is the same as a noun compound (1st word stress).

#### Fore-

**F**OREarm

**F**OREcast

**F**OREthought

**F**OREsight

#### Out-

**O**UTlook

**O**UTline

**O**UTrage

**O**UT put

#### UP-

**U**Pshot

**U**Pkeep

**U**Proar

**U**Pstart



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## Suffix: word ending

DO NOT change the stress of the root word with these word endings:

Suffix	Example
-er	<b>TEACH</b> er
-en	<b>LENGTH</b> en
-ful	<b>GRATE</b> ful
-hood	<b>PARENT</b> hood
-ish	<b>TICKEL</b> ish
-less	<b>END</b> less
-ly	<b>LOVE</b> ly
-ship	<b>FRIEND</b> ship
-able	<b>LIKE</b> able
-dom	<b>KING</b> dom
-ess	<b>WAIT</b> ress
-ling	<b>DUCK</b> ling
-some	<b>HAND</b> some
-wise	<b>LIKE</b> wise
-y	<b>STICK</b> y
-or	<b>CONTR</b> actor
-ing	<b>COM</b> ing



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Stress falls 1 syllable before these word endings:

Suffix	Example	Ruden Phonetics
-ic	geo <b>GRAPH</b> ic	/jeeu <b>graf</b> ik/
-ical	eco <b>LOG</b> ical	/eku <b>loj</b> ikul/
-ify	<b>SPEC</b> ify	/s <b>pes</b> ifI/
-omy	e <b>CON</b> omy	/ee <b>kon</b> umee/
-ogy	bi <b>O</b> Logy	/bI <b>ol</b> ujee/
-edy	<b>REM</b> edy	/r <b>em</b> udee/
-istry	<b>CHEM</b> istry	/k <b>em</b> ustree/
-metry	ge <b>O</b> metry	/jee <b>om</b> utree/
-ive	re <b>SPON</b> sive	/re <b>spons</b> iv/
-ity	com <b>MUN</b> ity	/ku <b>my</b> oonidee/
-tion	cre <b>A</b> tion	/kree <b>A</b> shun/
-ion	tu <b>I</b> tion	/too <b>i</b> shun/
-ious	con <b>TAG</b> ious	/kunt <b>Aj</b> us/
-ily	<b>HAPP</b> ily	/h <b>ap</b> ulee/
-eous	cou <b>RAGE</b> ous	/ker <b>Aj</b> us/
-able	de <b>PEND</b> able	/dee <b>p</b> endubul/
-ible	for <b>MID</b> able	/f <b>orm</b> idubul/
-ophy	<b>AT</b> rophy	/a <b>tr</b> ufee/
-graphy	ge <b>O</b> graphy	/jee <b>og</b> rufee/
-ogist	bi <b>O</b> Logist	/bI <b>ol</b> ujist/
-cian	phy <b>SIC</b> ian	/fiz <b>i</b> shun/
-meter	spee <b>DO</b> meter	/spu <b>d</b> omider/
-ogist	psy <b>CHO</b> logist	/sI <b>k</b> olujist/
-man	<b>SALES</b> man	/s <b>Al</b> zmin/



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\*\*\***Exceptions:** COMfortable, VEGetable, IRritable, comPETitive, conSEcutive, maNIpulative.

**Stress falls 1 syllable before word endings of a medical procedure:**

**Examples:** colonOscopy, tracheOtomy, BIopsy

**Stress falls 2 syllables before these word endings:**

Suffix	Example
-ate (for 3 or 4 syll words)	EDucate
-ary (for 3 or 4 syll words)	VOLuntary
-ist	THERapist

\*\*\***Exception:** 4 or more syllable words - stress 1 syllable before the suffix -ary.  
Ex: eleMENTary

**Stress pattern changes with these word endings:**

Suffix	Root Word	Root Word + Suffix
-eous	adVANtage	advanTAgeous
-graphy	PHOto	phoTOgraphy
-ial	PROverb	proVERbial
-ian	PARis	paRIsian
-ic	CLImate	cliMatic
-ical	biOlogy	bioLOGical
-ious	INjure	inJURious
-ity	TRANquil	tranQUILity
-ion	GRAduate	GraduAtion



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## French suffixes: stress falls on these word endings

Suffix	Example	Ruden Phonetics
-aire	million <b>AIRE</b>	/milyun <b>Ar</b> /
-ee	employ <b>EE</b>	/employ <b>yee</b> /
-eer	engin <b>EER</b>	/enjine <b>eer</b> /
-ese	chin <b>ESE</b>	/chIn <b>eez</b> /
-esque	grot <b>ESQUE</b>	/grO <b>tesk</b> /
-ique	techn <b>IQUE</b>	/tekne <b>ek</b> /
-eur	chauff <b>EUR</b>	/shO <b>fer</b> / or 'show <b>fer</b> '
-oon	ballo <b>ON</b>	/buloon/
-ette	etiqu <b>ETTE</b>	/eduh <b>kit</b> /
-et	fil <b>ET</b>	/ful <b>A</b> /

## BONUS: Word Stress Rule

### Numbers

*Stress changes when counting vs. stating quantities, such as time, money, and measurements.*

#### A. Counting:

- stress the 1st syllable in “teen” numbers: **THIR**teen, **FOUR**teen, **EIGH**teen
- stress the 2nd syllable when above twenty: twenty-**ONE**, twenty-**TWO**, forty-**SIX**

#### B. Stating Numbers (time, money, amounts)

- stress the last part of “teen” numbers: thir**TEEN**, four**TEEN**, eigh**TEEN**



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## Word Stress Practice - Multi-syllabic Words

- *Every word in English has one syllable that is stressed.*
- *A stressed syllable is said longer, louder, with a higher pitch, and full vowel pronunciation.*

### 2 syllable words with the stress on the 1st syllable:

**termite, minute, rotate, concrete, migrate, produce, reptile, inflate, inside, decade, compile, confine, outrage, into, only, other, over, also, any, very after, even, ever, little number, local, during, something, always, social, second, public, often, business, money, power, country, service, able, major, open, problem, level, question, body, person, office, likely, process, father, city, study, future, present, action, woman, women, order, special, moment, training, meeting, rather, human, matter, language, central, section, building, common, subject, nature, single, reason, member, table, value.**

### 2 syllable words with the stress on the 2nd syllable:

**about, between, because, again, within, without, around, although, away, support, himself, control, report, police, itself, across, effect, upon, themselves, provide, today, behind, believe, ago, indeed, herself, return, concerned, account, award, include, amount, despite, instead, success, design, alone, throughout, produce, direct, myself, defense, beyond, allow, hotel, appeal, appear, demand, aware, concern, advice, event, extent, degree, expect, response, yourself, accept, review, unless, supply, disease, remain, attack, campaign, suggest, exchange, machine, apply, create, avoid, agree, polite, parade, insane, confuse, complete, debate, remote, obscure, intrude, conclude, refuse, excuse, invite, ignite, excite, expire, inflate, inside, include, subside, reside, impede, entire, dislike, compose, commute, divide, confine, divine, dilute, dilate, partake, perfume, persuade, decide, define, degrade, device, decay, desire, compile, confine, combine, revive, survive, contrive, engage, embrace, unlace, reduce, recline.**



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### 3 syllable words: mixed stress

alternate, **i**ndicate, **i**mitate, **a**dvertise, **c**rocodile, **e**stimate, **e**nvelope, **e**xercise, intervene, **d**elagate, **c**orrelate, **t**urpentine, interfere, **g**eneralize, **d**estitute, **s**ubstitute, **c**oncentrate, **d**istribute, **s**tethoscope, **m**icroscope, **t**elescope, **h**ibernate, **o**perate, **t**erminate, interfere, **i**ndicate, **j**uvenile, **s**atellite, **e**xecute, **c**ontribute, **p**ersecute, **d**elagate, **d**emonstrate, **d**ecorate, reunite, **r**egulate, reproduce, **r**ecognize, **i**ntegrate, **t**elephone, **c**onfiscate, **b**utterfly, computer, umbrella, **h**amburger, **d**inosaur, **b**icycle, area, arena, **b**enefit, consultant, **d**ifficult, **d**ocument, **g**igantic, magnetic, piano, **p**lentiful, **r**aspberry, **t**ypical, uneven, **v**itamin, **v**ictory, **e**xpression

### 4 syllable words:

alligator, **h**elicopter, **w**atermelon, macaroni, **a**natomy, bacteria, biologist, **d**ifficulty, intelligent, librarian, **s**ignificant, **s**olidify, **t**erritory, demonstration, entertainment, congratulate, impossible, **e**levator, convertible, **c**alculator, harmonica, operation, discovery, invitation, **k**indergarten, information, **f**ertilizer, electrician, **e**mergency, delivery, accelerate, **J**anuary, invisible, **F**ebruary, binoculars, American, celebration, cemetery

### 5 syllable words:

antibiotic, bicentennial, fusibility, insignificant, respectable, satisfactory, unrealistic, congratulations, **c**apitalism, **p**uritanism, **f**iguratively, inevitable, catholicism, inadequacy, communicative, accelerator, refrigerator, incinerator, sophisticated, curiosity, aristocracy, archaeology, university, differentiate, underestimate, rehabilitate, decontaminate, classification, characteristic, Mediterranean, qualification, continuation, consideration, appreciation, enthusiastic, predisposition, preoccupation, self-preservation



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## Word Stress Practice - Heteronym Words/Pairs

*Words that are spelled the same but have different meanings depending on the stress.*

- **noun:** 1st syllable stress
- **verb:** 2nd syllable stress

Noun	Verb
<b>AB</b> stract	abst <b>RACT</b>
<b>A</b> ccent	a <b>CCENT</b>
<b>A</b> ddict	a <b>DDICT</b>
<b>A</b> ddress	a <b>DDRESS</b>
<b>A</b> nnex	a <b>NNEX</b>
<b>A</b> lly	a <b>LLY</b>
<b>A</b> tttribute	a <b>TTRI</b> bute
<b>COM</b> bat	com <b>BAT</b>
<b>COM</b> mune	com <b>MUNE</b>
<b>COM</b> pact	com <b>PACT</b>
<b>COM</b> pound	com <b>POUND</b>
<b>COM</b> press	com <b>PRESS</b>
<b>CON</b> duct	con <b>DUCT</b>
<b>CON</b> fines	con <b>FINES</b>
<b>CON</b> verse	con <b>VERSE</b>
<b>CON</b> vert	con <b>VERT</b>
<b>CON</b> vict	con <b>VICT</b>
<b>DE</b> crease	de <b>CREASE</b>
<b>DI</b> gest	di <b>GEST</b>
<b>DIS</b> card	dis <b>CARD</b>



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Noun	Verb
<b>DIS</b> charge	dis <b>CHARGE</b>
<b>EN</b> velope	en <b>VELO</b> pe
<b>ES</b> cort	es <b>CORT</b>
<b>EX</b> port	ex <b>PORT</b>
<b>FI</b> nance	fi <b>NANCE</b>
<b>GRA</b> duate	gradu <b>ATE</b>
<b>IN</b> crease	in <b>CREASE</b>
<b>OB</b> ject	ob <b>JECT</b>
<b>PER</b> mit	per <b>MIT</b>
<b>PER</b> vert	per <b>VERT</b>
<b>PRE</b> fix	pre <b>FIX</b>
<b>PRO</b> ceeds	pro <b>CEEDS</b>
<b>PRO</b> duce	pro <b>DUCE</b>
<b>PRO</b> gress	pro <b>GRESS</b>
<b>PRO</b> ject	pro <b>JECT</b>
<b>PRO</b> test	pro <b>TEST</b>
<b>RE</b> cap	re <b>CAP</b>
<b>RE</b> fill	re <b>FILL</b>
<b>RE</b> fund	re <b>FUND</b>
<b>RE</b> fuse	re <b>FUSE</b>
<b>SUR</b> vey	sur <b>VEY</b>
<b>TRANS</b> plant	trans <b>PLANT</b>
<b>UP</b> set	up <b>SET</b>



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Adjective	Verb
<b>AB</b> sent	ab <b>SENT</b>
<b>FRE</b> quent	fre <b>QUENT</b>
<b>PER</b> fect	per <b>FECT</b>

Adjective	Noun
in <b>VAL</b> id	<b>IN</b> valid
mi <b>NUTE</b>	<b>MI</b> nute
com <b>PLEX</b>	<b>COM</b> plex



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# Word Stress Practice - Compound Nouns

*Stress the first word.*

## Compound Words:

**dish**washer, **heart**beat, **salt**water, **after**math, **door**bell, **high**way, **sauce**pan, **air**craft, **down**fall, **home**work, **saw**dust, **air**field, **down**pour, **honey**moon, **screen**play, **air**mail, **draw**back, **horse**power, **screw**driver, **arm**chair, **dress**maker, **house**work, **seashell**, **drive**way, **jelly**fish, **seaweed**, **back**ground, **drug**store, **jig**saw, **shell**fish, **back**lash, **drum**stick, **key**board, **shop**lifter, **back**log, **ear**drum, **knee**cap, **short**hand, **back**side, **ear**phone, **lady**bug, **shot**gun, **band**wagon, **ear**ring, **left**overs, **sick**bed, **bank**book, **earth**worm, **letter**head, **side**burns, **bank**note, **light**house, **side**kick, **bar**man, **egg**head, **lip**stick, **side**walk, baseball, eyelid, loophole, silkworm, bathroom, eyewitness, lovebird, skullcap, bedspread, farmhouse, mailbox, skyscraper, bedtime, fatherhood, manhunt, slaughterhouse, billboard, feedback, mastermind, sleepwalking, blackbird, fingernail, middleman, snowball, blacklist, fingerprint, neighborhood, snowfall, bulldog, firearm, network, softball, bullfight, firefly, newsletter, songbird, catfish, firewood, newspaper, soundtrack, chairman, fishbowl, newspaper, soundtrack, chairman, fishbowl, nightclub, spaceship, cheapskate, floodlight, nightmare, sportsman, checkup, footnote, notebook, spotlight, chopstick, footprint, outlook, stalemate, clockwork, freeway, overcoat, stepchild, clotheshorse, foretaste, overseas, stopwatch, clothesline, fruitcake, overtime, strongbox, copycat, gatecrasher, painkiller, suitcase, copyright, ghostwriter, pancake, summertime, cornerstone, godfather, paperback, sunspot, countdown, goldfish, passport, sweetheart, countryside, greenhouse, password, swordfish, courthouse, guidebook, penknife, tablespoon, courtyard, guideline, pickpocket, teardrop, cowboy, gunfire, pigtail, teaspoon, crackdown, gunpowder, pocketknife, toadstool, crossroad, hairdresser, quicksand, toothpick, cutback, handbag, racehorse, tugboat, daybreak, handshake, rainbow, watchdog, daytime, handwriting, rattlesnake wheelchair, deadline, headlight, roadrunner, windpipe, deadlock, headquarters, runway, wiretap.



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