

## Sentence Stress & Rhythm

### I. Compare the stress patterns below:

<i>overlook</i>	<i>Tell the cook.</i>
<i>guarantee</i>	<i>Can't you see?</i>
<i>approximate</i>	<i>a box of it</i>
<i>identification</i>	<i>We took a vacation.</i>
<i>electrification</i>	<i>She went to the station.</i>

- Just as words have stressed and unstressed syllables, so do phrases and sentences.

### II. English is a **stress**-timed language:

*MICE EAT CHEESE.*

*The MICE EAT CHEESE.*

*The MICE EAT the CHEESE.*

*The MICE might EAT the CHEESE.*

*The MICE might have EATEN the CHEESE.*

*The MICE might have been EATING the CHEESE.*

- Although the sentences above differ in the number of syllables, they all take roughly the same amount of time.

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21G.213 / 21G.214 High-Intermediate Academic Communication  
Spring 2004

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.