

Thought Groups, Prominence & Intonation

I. Thought groups / Intonation units

- are longer in rapid speech but shorter in deliberate speech
- are grammatically & semantically coherent
- are often set off by pauses
- have one word more prominent than the rest
- have its own intonation pattern

e.g. *In today's lesson, / we will look at thought groups / and have some practice / in marking them in sentences / and using them in speech.*

II. Which word is the most prominent in a thought group?

1. New or important information, usually the last content word, in a neutral phrase

What are you doing?
Please record it for me.
There's too much traffic.
He doesn't understand her.

2. Emphatic stress on a particular element

MATTHEW'S hair is blue.

Matthew's HAIR is blue.

Matthew's hair IS blue.

Matthew's hair is BLUE.

3. Contrastive stress on two parallel elements

Is the exam on Monday or Wednesday?

- Circle the words that receive the most stress.

A: *What did you think of the movie?*

B: *It was really good. What did you think?*

A: *I'll get it.*

A: *Thank you.*

B: *No, I'll get it.*

B: *Thank you.*

A: *How was the movie?*

B: *It was too long.*

A: *Was it a long drive?*

B: *Yeah, it was too long.*

III. Intonation

4 extra high

3 high

na

2 mid *This is a*
lesson on into
1 low
tion.

- Common intonation patterns

1. *What time is it?*

2. *Are you ready?*

3. *I'd like a cheeseburger, small fries, and a large coke.*

4. *Would you like coffee or tea?* (closed-choice)

5. *Would you like coffee or tea?* (open-choice)

6. *It's a beautiful day, isn't it?* (eliciting agreement)

7. *He's not leaving yet, is he?* (signaling uncertainty)

- Intonation can change the meaning of an utterance.

I've just read a book.

What?

What?

What?

- Who's stupid?

Susan said / the boss is stupid.

Susan / said the boss / is stupid.

- How many items were sold?

He sold his house boat and trailer.