

# Introduction to English Linguistics (Part 1)

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Topics covered in the next three sessions

1. The sounds of English (phonetics)
2. **Sounds and their meaning (phonology)**
3. Applying phonetics and phonology

# Sound and Meaning

Session 4, Phonetics/Phonology

## Contents of this session

A few things we'll look at today:

1. Complementary distribution
2. Syllables
3. Consonant clusters
4. Stress

## Allophones

The phoneme /r/ has the dialectal variants [ɹ] (English RP) and [ɹ̥] (General American). When looking at English in its entirety, these variants are **allophones** of the **phoneme** /r/.

## Complementary distribution

Phoneticians more frequently speak of **allophones** when looking at variation that depends on the context of a sound.

**p**ark

co**p**

we**pt**

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**p**ark  
+ASPIRATION

co**p**  
-ASPIRATION

we**pt**  
-RELEASE

## Syllables

A syllable can be described as the next larger unit of measurement after a phone.

[k] is a phone

[kɪd] is a sequence of three phones that form a syllable (and a word)

[kɪdɪŋ] is a sequence of two syllables

**A syllable is a vowel that can be preceded and/or followed by a number of consonants**

## How many syllables?

*huge*

*icy*

*wretched*

*economical*

*squirrels*

## Consonant clusters

A syllable can be described phonotactically as a consonants clustered around a vowel nucleus.

(CCC) V (CCCC)

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Examples:

*texts* (C) V (CCCC)

*stride* (CCC) V (C)

*traps* (CC) V (CC)

## Stress

Syllables can be either **stressed** or **unstressed**, a difference that may distinguish different words that look similar at first glance.

/ˈɒbdʒekt/

*object* (noun)

*The object has been damaged by the storm*

/əbˈdʒekt/

*object* (verb)

*Your honor, I object to that claim!*

## Stress

Placing stress on normally unstressed syllables - for example in function words like *to* or *of* - can be a way of highlighting things in communication.

*I have a headache AND I am hungry*

*A cheeseburger with NO onions, please.*