

Speak Easy #007 – How to stress “-ion”

Episode description

Suzanne and Andrew teach you how to properly stress words that end with the suffix “-ion” in this Speak Easy episode.

Fun fact

Confused about how to spell words that end with “-ion”? Check out this helpful article from Oxford Dictionaries: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/spelling/words-ending-in-sion-tion-and-cion>.

Material included in the study guide

- Transcript
- Practice exercises
- Bonus audio download





Transcript

Andrew: Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey there, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hey, Andrew, how's it going?

Andrew: Oh, not too bad. How about yourself?

Suzanne: Pretty good, except I went to the gym 2 days ago for the first time in, like, 3 weeks. And it felt like it was the first time I'd ever worked out in my whole life and I'm actually having trouble walking. My legs hurt so much that I actually couldn't get down the stairs to go grocery shopping yesterday.

Andrew: Oh my. That sounds like maybe you overdid it?

Suzanne: I guess so. But I didn't even do so much. It was really just the fact that I didn't work out for a while and I think I'm kind of out of shape. So I think it kicked my butt a bit.

Andrew: Well, I'm sure you'll get back into the swing of things after just a couple more days.

Suzanne: Of rest, yeah.

Andrew: You'll feel good again soon.

Suzanne: Yeah, I hope so, 'cause walking, it's important. You know?

Andrew: Super important, absolutely.

Suzanne, today we are back with a Speak Easy episode. And I love the Speak Easy series, because it's where you teach us, me and all of the listeners, some interesting and very important pronunciation rules to help our pronunciation sound more natural and more understandable.

Suzanne: Yeah. I'm glad you like it.

Andrew: Yeah, of course. It's very fun. So what are we covering today in this episode?



- Suzanne: So today, we're covering one simple aspect of the larger idea of word stress. And we're looking at the kind of stress that is in a word that has two or more syllables. So, some words in English that instead of having just one syllable, like "walk" or "work," we know that has one syllable, so we stress that whole word. But if the word has two or more syllables, like "walking" or "working," we have one syllable that's stressed or emphasized more than the other one. Now, it can get a little complicated when there are three, four, five, or six syllables in a word. So today we're gonna look at where to stress in a word that ends with "-ion," which is a common ending in English.
- Andrew: Absolutely, a very common ending for many nouns in English. And I think you know, Suzanne, if you speak a Romance language, you'll probably have words in your language that end with the same ending, but I believe the stress is different.
- Suzanne: It is, and the pronunciation of the "-ion" ending is also different. So before we actually look at the stress, we should just kind of quickly cover how to pronounce that ending, because I think, for example, in French we might say "-sion" "-sion," right? And we really pronounce the "E" and the "ON" and maybe in Italian, you might say "-zione."
- Andrew: I don't speak any Italian, Suzanne. I'm sorry, can't help you there.
- Suzanne: I'm super rusty. But many times in Romance languages, the "-ion" is actually pronounced making it a two-syllable interaction, like "i-on" "i-on." However, in English, you're going to make it one short, simple sound, and it is the common /ə/ sound, like in "the." And it is what we call a schwa, actually. This is a schwa vowel in phonetics, and it's the most common vowel sound in English. We're going to do another podcast on just the schwa, so we'll talk about that another time in more detail. But I just wanted to make sure that people knew, since we're focusing on "-ion" words, that they know that it's just like /jən/.
- Andrew: /jən/. Yes, so to put it in the context of a word, a word like communication, right? /jən/. Communication.
- Suzanne: /jən/. And, in fact, some people you'll notice if you listen to many different speakers of English, you may notice that in North America, we actually sometimes use an /ɪ/ like as in 'sit' and we might even say communication, /jɪn/.
- Andrew: /jɪn/, yeah, /jɪn/, /jən/.
- Suzanne: /jɪn/ or /jən/, both are correct.
- Andrew: Yup, yup. Good point.

Suzanne: Yeah. So now we're gonna listen to an example dialogue, and it's kind of a lengthy dialogue. And I want us to see if we can start to pick up the patterns of where the stress would be in "-ion" ending words. So let's see if we can start to hear a pattern and guess what the rule is for this kind of word.

Andrew: All right. So, everybody, listen for these words that end with "-ion" /ʃn/ ending. And see if you can identify where the stress is placed in that word while you're listening to this dialogue. OK, let's take a listen to it now.

Friend: Hey, Kate, did you finish the communications homework?

Kate: No, not yet. I had to finish my application and get started on collecting my thesis information. Was it hard?

Friend: Well, after spending 2 hours on the same essay, I certainly had some frustration. What was the application you were working on?

Kate: Oh, it's for this not-for-profit organization that I want to work for for my internship.

Friend: Oh, cool. Do they ask for any certifications? I know I have to renew some of mine.

Kate: No, no certifications at the moment. But I have to make a presentation of my experience with other corporations. Like I have time for more work.

Friend: Good luck.

Andrew: OK, that was great, Suzanne. I think now let's listen to it one more time, but at a slightly slowed down pace. The first time we listened to it, that was full native-speaker speaking speed. But now, let's listen to it one more time at a slower pace. Does that sound OK to you?

Suzanne: Yeah, that sounds good.

Andrew: OK, here we go.

- Friend: Hey, Kate, did you finish the communications homework?
- Kate: No, not yet. I had to finish my application and get started on collecting my thesis information. Was it hard?
- Friend: Well, after spending 2 hours on the same essay, I certainly had some frustration. What was the application you were working on?
- Kate: Oh, it's for this not-for-profit organization that I want to work for for my internship.
- Friend: Oh, cool. Do they ask for any certifications? I know I have to renew some of mine.
- Kate: No, no certifications at the moment. But I have to make a presentation of my experience with other corporations. Like I have time for more work.
- Friend: Good luck.
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- Suzanne: So, Andrew, now let's look at some of the words that we heard, the "-ion" words. What words did you hear in that dialogue?
- Andrew: That was a gold mine of words that end with the /ɪn/ ending, Suzanne. Good job making up that dialogue. Well, let's see. There was communications, application, certification, frustration, organization, corporation, presentation, wow. Lots and lots of /ɪn/ words there.
- Suzanne: Totally. So what did you notice? Since you were pronouncing all of those words, what did you notice about where the stress was in those "-ion" words?
- Andrew: All right, well, let's repeat one of the words again. Let's use frustration. Frustration, frustration, frustration. So the stress seems to be on that /e/ sound frustration, frustration, frustration, right?
- Suzanne: Exactly. Exactly. Let's try another one, so maybe, like, application.
- Andrew: Application, /e/ /e/ application.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Andrew: Again on that /e/ vowel sound that comes in the middle of the word towards the end, maybe the /,æplɪ'ke/. So the third syllable.

- Suzanne: Exactly. So, if you think about it, that's the syllable that's right before the "-ion" ending. Right? If we add the "-ion" to the word or "-tion" or "-sion" as it's sometimes spelled, we can then ding, ding, ding, make up a rule saying that when we have a "-ion" ending, the stress in the word, or the emphasis, is going to go to the syllable that comes right before the "-ion" ending, which is usually the second to the last syllable of the word. So if we sound out /kə - mju: - nɪ - 'keɪ - ʃn/. So we have five syllables and the /k/ is our second to last syllable because the "-ion" ending to that word makes that /e/ the syllable that we emphasize, right? Communication.
- Andrew: Very, very cool. So, simply, all we have to do is stress the syllable before the "-ion" ending.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: Wow, I love that.
- Suzanne: It's your quick and dirty tip.
- Andrew: You know, English, as our listeners know, has so many exceptions to the rule that it's really refreshing and nice when you can learn something that is as straightforward as this rule is.
- Suzanne: Yes, and as we'll find out as we dive deeper and deeper into word stress, there will be many other exceptions. But in this case, it's nice and dependable, which is nice.
- Andrew: Sue, thank you for sharing this pronunciation rule with us today.
- Suzanne: Of course, yeah, my pleasure.
- Andrew: We should let everybody know that there is a study guide for this episode available to all Culips members to download from our website, Culips.com. So, Culips members, you know that the study guide is there but, if you're not a Culips member, you might want to consider signing up so that you can get the study guide for this episode. It has some practice exercises, some auto exercises, even has the transcript in there. Yeah, if you're a Culips member, you don't get the study guide just for this episode, but for all of the episodes in our library. So it's a really great resource, and an affordable resource. So check out our website, Culips.com, for all of that information.
- Suzanne: Awesome. And don't forget that you can find us on Facebook at Facebook.com/CulipsPodcast. And we love to hear from you, so you can get in touch with us at contact@Culips.com.



Andrew: That is right. Well, everyone, that's it for now, but we'll be back soon. So we'll talk to you then. Bye.

Suzanne: Bye.

Practice exercises

1. Practice the words stress for “-ion” ending words by underlining the syllable you think should be stressed in the words below:

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Communication | Reception | Intimidation |
| Elation | Punctuation | Annotation |
| Population | Perception | Discussion |

2. Practice pronouncing some two-syllable “-ion” ending words by listening and repeating with the recording. If you want, you can underline the syllable you think should be stressed first, then practice pronouncing the words. [The audio file can be downloaded from the Culips Dashboard.](#)

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| Mansion | Fission | Version |
| Lesion | Mission | Session |
| Pension | Vision | Passion |

3. Practice pronouncing three- or more syllable words with the “-ion” ending by listening and repeating with the recording. Again, you can start by underlining the stressed syllable first and then repeating the words. [The audio file can be downloaded from the Culips Dashboard.](#)

| | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Division | Decision | Progression |
| Creation | Infusion | Suspension |
| Apprehension | Comprehension | Decompression |

4. Advanced work! Can you UNDERLINE the MAIN stress in the word and HIGHLIGHT the syllables with the “uh” sounds, or reduced sounds?

| | | |
|--|---------------|-----------|
| ex. Re <u>vi</u> s <u>i</u> o <u>n</u> | Station | Intension |
| Invasion | Erosion | Allusion |
| Delusion | Communication | Expansion |

Answers

1.

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Communi <u>c</u> ation | Re <u>c</u> eption | Intimidat <u>i</u> on |
| Elat <u>i</u> on | Punctuat <u>i</u> on | Annotat <u>i</u> on |
| Populat <u>i</u> on | Per <u>c</u> eption | Discuss <u>i</u> on |

2.

| | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Mans <u>i</u> on | Fiss <u>i</u> on | Ver <u>s</u> ion |
| Les <u>i</u> on | Miss <u>i</u> on | Sess <u>i</u> on |
| Pens <u>i</u> on | Viss <u>i</u> on | Pass <u>i</u> on |

3.

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Divis <u>i</u> on | Decis <u>i</u> on | Progre <u>s</u> sion |
| Creat <u>i</u> on | Infus <u>i</u> on | Suspens <u>i</u> on |
| Apprehens <u>i</u> on | Comprehens <u>i</u> on | Decompress <u>i</u> on |

4.

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| ex. <u>Re</u> vision | <u>Sta</u> tion | Inten <u>sion</u> |
| In <u>vas</u> ion | Ero <u>sion</u> | All <u>us</u> ion |
| Del <u>us</u> ion | Communica <u>tion</u> | Expans <u>ion</u> |



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