Prominence

Review

- Word stress: There is always at least one syllable that is strongly stressed.
- Sentence stress: Some stress tends to fall on all content words in an utterance.
- Vowels are reduced in unstressed syllables and in function words.
- Word stress and sentence stress combine to create the rhythm of an English utterance.

e.g.) *The movement of pitch within an intonation unit is referred to as the intonation contour.*

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 prominent element
- have its own intonation contour

Linking & blending occur within, NOT across, thought groups.
Four levels of sentence stress

1. unstressed syllable
2. lightly stressed (content words)
3. strongly stressed (prominent element)
4. extra strong (contrastive / emphatic stress)

How would you say, “I am listening”? 

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?  
   Here’s a package for you.  
   There’s too much traffic.  
   He doesn’t understand her.  
   Please record it for me.

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 this a HIGH- or LOW-intermediate English class?*
*HIGH-intermediate*

*Is this the low-intermediate ENGLISH class?*
*No, it’s the HIGH-intermediate class.*

Circle the words that receive the most stress.

A: *Hi, how are you?*
B: *Pretty good, how are you?*

A: *What did you think of the movie?*
B: *It was really good. What did you think?*

A: *I’ll get it.*
B: *No, I’ll get it.*

A: *Thank you.*
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.*