

Part IV Pattern Expectations

ACCENT PATTERNS

If you are constructing a word out of stems and prefixes and suffixes according to one of the patterns given in these lessons, then there are some rules that help predict the accent placement and rhythm of the word. These rules apply to the context form of the word, the version without any whispering.

The basic rule is to count back two vowels from the end and place an accent on that vowel. In counting back those two vowels, skip any epenthetic vowels (an *-e-* inserted to break up an unallowed cluster of consonants) in final syllables or stem joiners (an *-a-* that connects a noun root to a verb root in a complex stem).

The next step is to test for certain special conditions that may alter the accent.

1. If the accented vowel is immediately before a glottal stop then the glottal stop is dropped and the vowel is lengthened and given a falling tone (marked with both the raised dot and the accent mark).

-áʔ- → *-á·-*

2. If the accented vowel is immediately before an *-hl-*, *-hy-*, *-hw-*, or *-hn-*, then the *-h-* is dropped and the vowel is lengthened and given a falling tone (marked with both the raised dot and the accent mark).

-áhn- → *-á·n-*

3. If the accented vowel is immediately before a single consonant other than *-h-* (single consonant means not a cluster of consonants before the next vowel), then the vowel is lengthened and the accent is shifted to the following vowel.

-áta- → *-a·tá-*

Some examples:

<i>one animal</i>	<i>s + ka + naskw + at =</i>	<i>skanaskwat</i>
	place the accent	<i>skanáskwat</i>
	test for special conditions (none apply)	<i>skanáskwat</i>

<i>one word</i>	<i>s + ka + wɔn + at =</i>	<i>skawɔnat</i>
	place accent	<i>skawɔnat</i>
	test for special conditions (#3)	<i>skawɔ·nát</i>

<i>one mind</i>	<i>s + ka + ʔnikuhl + at =</i>	<i>skaʔnikuhlat</i>
	place accent	<i>skaʔnikúhlat</i>
	test for special conditions (#2)	<i>skaʔnikú·lat</i>

<i>I have a car</i>	wak + ʔsleht + yΛ =	wakeʔslehtayΛ
place accent		wakeʔsléhtayΛ
test for special conditions (none apply)		wakeʔsléhtayΛ
<i>a good house</i>	ka + nuhs + iyo =	kanuhsiyo
place accent		kanuhsíyo
test for special conditions (#3)		kanuhsi·yó
<i>his car</i>	lao + ʔsleht =	laoʔsleht
place accent		laóʔsleht
test for special conditions (#1)		laó·sleht

Because these rules have few exceptions, they can be used to reason backwards. If you know the correct pronunciation of a word you can sometimes figure out its constituent parts. For example since long accented syllables only result from a transformed **-ʔ-** or **-h-** (before a resonant sound), **nikaʔslehtó·tΛ** must contain a root **-oʔtΛ** to account for the long accented syllable. In **lonΛstayΛ** the **-a-** must be a stem joiner or the accent would not have been placed three vowels from the end. These rules can also be helpful in guiding your hearing of new words. For example, you would not expect to hear a long accented vowel before an **-h-** or an accented vowel before a glottal stop or a cluster of consonants between a dragged syllable and an accented one. The rules can be quite helpful in this way, but they are not foolproof. Some exceptions can be explained as part of historical processes that have changed the language over the generations (for that reason they are sometimes used to speculate about older forms of the language). Remember also that the rules apply to context forms only. The rules that convert the context forms into final forms (the ones that usually have the whispered endings) may distort things. Consider the word for *mind*. It is made up of a normal prefix **o-** and then a noun root **-ʔnikuhl-** and finally a suffix **-aʔ**. The accent rules apply as expected:

o + ʔnikuhl + aʔ =	oʔnikuhlaʔ
place accent	oʔnikúhlaʔ
test for special conditions (#2)	oʔnikú·laʔ

This is indeed how the word is pronounced in context with words coming after it, but then the rules for whispering replace the long vowel with an **-h-** before the whispered syllable:

oʔnikúhla

WORKING WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS

If you have the opportunity to learn new words and expressions from someone who already speaks Oneida, there are a few precautions that can make your questioning more satisfying and productive. Native speakers, those who have learned Oneida as their first language, did not learn by being taught about writing, stems, prefixes, or grammatical terms. They may have been exposed to some grammatical labels, or some writing system, or may have done their own analysis of the language, but the most reliable resource they have is their knowledge of the spoken language, its words and expressions. If you ask questions such as:

- What is the stem for *potato*?
- How do you spell that?
- Is there an h in that word?
- Is that an objective verb?
- Where's the accent in that word?
- What is the whispered syllable in this word?
- Do I need an epenthetic vowel here?

then you are asking about the analysis of the language and you may or may not get reliable answers. It's something like asking an English speaker where the past tense in *went* is. One can speak the language perfectly well without knowing the answers to any of them. The kind of questions that tap a speaker's reliable knowledge are questions such as:

- How do you say *potato*?
- Which of these two pronunciations sounds better?
- How do you say *she likes him*?
- How do I ask someone's name?
- What does _____ mean?

Transcribing

Converting someone's spoken language to writing is a skill that improves with practice and knowledge. The more you know the expected sound patterns (the possible sounds, the accent patterns, and which sounds can go together) and how the letters represent those sounds, the better your ears can focus. The more stems and roots you learn, the easier it is to spot them as building blocks in larger words. To transcribe any word you will probably need to hear it repeated several times. Use your own pronunciation to provide the speaker with feedback about whether you are hearing the word accurately. You can ask a speaker to say the word slowly but remember unnatural slowness adds some distortion to natural speech - rhythms, glottal stops, and h's in particular. If you do transcribe a word spoken very slowly, make sure you also listen to it spoken at a natural rate to verify it. If you have trouble with some detail (is that sound an **h** or a long vowel; is the accent on the second or third syllable), see if you can produce the contrast between your choices and ask the speaker to tell you which sounds better.

It is almost impossible to accurately transcribe a whispered syllable. You can often tell that such a syllable exists but not what the sounds are. The best recourse is to listen to

the unwhispered form of the same word. Since the whispered form is the one that is natural to say in isolation, to hear the unwhispered form you'll need to hear it in a sentence with words following it. One of the easiest ways to do this is to create a simple yes-no question so the word you are trying to transcribe comes at the beginning of a sentence followed by the question word **ka**. If that doesn't work, you might think of a more complicated sentence as long as the word you are interested in doesn't come at the end.

Analysis

Unless you are trying to learn Oneida word by word, when a speaker tells you a new word, you probably want to figure out its internal structure, especially the stem it is built on. Then you can use your knowledge of the grammar to create other words from the same stem. This is like solving a puzzle and you often need several clues. You know from what you've learned so far that stems get distorted in various contexts - an initial vowel on a verb stem may have been swallowed up by a pronoun prefix (vowel drop rule); a glottal stop or **h** may be missing because of an accent rule; you may not know whether an **-e-** is part of a stem or an epenthetic vowel; some consonants may be part of a noun stem or a nominalizer; and so on. Use your knowledge of these rules to help reconstruct the stems. At times you will need to collect additional words from the speaker. Here's an example.

Suppose I have managed to transcribe a word for *he's sick* as:

lonuhwáktanihe

I know there must be a pronoun prefix for *he* and a verb stem for *sick*. I recognize **lo-** as one of the *he* prefixes. This tells me the verb stem takes objective prefixes (a **la-** would have been subjective). I don't know whether the verb stem starts with **-n-** or whether the **lo-** prefix caused a vowel to drop. I can find out by asking the speaker how to say *I am sick*. If the speaker says **wakanuhwáktanihe**, I know the verb is an a-stem. If it is **waknuhwáktanihe**, then the stem begins with the **-n-**. It turns out to be the latter, so the stem is **-nuhwáktani-**. It takes objective pronoun prefixes and it means *to be sick*.

Another example - suppose I have asked how to say *she's tired* and I have transcribed the speaker's response as:

teyakohwish^hhe·yú

The beginning of the word doesn't match any pronoun prefix I know for *she*, so there must be some other prefix there. I do recognize **-yako-** as an objective prefix for *she*. To check if a vowel has been swallowed up I ask the speaker how to say *I'm tired* and transcribe the reply as:

tewakhwish^hhe·yú

I recognize the **wak-** prefix for *I* so now I know the stem is **-hwish^hhe·yú** with objective pronoun prefixes and an additional prefix **te-** is required.

One more example. Suppose you ask a speaker for the word for *sugar* and transcribe the answer as:

onutákehli

To learn the context form of this word, ask how to say *is it sugar?* This might be:

onutákli? ka

If you also ask how to say *I have some sugar*, you can transcribe the response as:

waknutaklí'tslayA

From these you can figure out that the stem for *sugar* is **-nutakli-**. It requires a nominalizer **-ʔtsl-**. You know the glottal stop is there because the accent has turned it into the long falling tone and that could not have come from any other sound before a **-t-**. The **-e-** in the noun must not be part of the stem, but something that is just part of the isolation form that goes along with the whispered syllable.

Meaning

Asking Oneida speakers about meaning is a trickier matter. You're really asking about translation and people's translation skills vary considerably. If you keep in mind that exact equivalents between languages are rare and that most languages have lots of synonyms, you shouldn't be surprised that focussing in on a specific meaning is hard work. Nor should you be surprised that different speakers see different shades of meaning in the same word. The same thing happens in English. When you are confronted with contrasting words that seem to have the same meaning, ask the speaker when one would be used but not the other. If this isn't working, make some guesses yourself and see how the speaker reacts to them. This way you can get a more precise understanding of vocabulary. For example, you can learn that there are several words for *animal*. The one we've learned **kanáskwa** is a generic word for animal but also contrasts with **kutíli** which are more the wild animals and **katshe·nA** which is *a pet*. You can also learn that there are several words for *mother*, one of which really means *parent* (the gender is in the pronoun prefix) and another meaning both *mother* and *aunt*.

WHISPERING RULES

Many Oneida words have two slightly different pronunciations depending on whether they occur at the end of a sentence or not. The form of the word that occurs within a sentence is called the context form; the form that occurs when the words come at the end of a sentence or if the word is spoken by itself is called the isolation or sentence final form. The most common difference between the two is that the last syllable of the isolation form is often whispered while it is fully pronounced in the context form. But there are other possible differences and although one cannot predict from one form of the word what the other will be, most words fall into one of the following six categories:

V represents any vowel (a,e,i,o,u,Λ)

R represents the resonants or semivowels (l,y,w,n)

C represents any consonant or cluster of consonants

underlining represents whispering

In the examples that follow context forms are on the left and isolation forms are on the right.

1. No Change: For many words the context form and the isolation form are the same.

skahwístat	<i>one dollar</i>
é·lhal	<i>dog</i>

2. Simple Whispering: A context form ending in a vowel with or without a following glottal stop -V(?) often becomes an isolation form with a whispered vowel -V.

otsi?tÁha	<i>bird</i>	otsi?t<u>Áha</u>
o·nÁste?	<i>corn</i>	o·nÁ<u>ste</u>
katekhu·níhe?	<i>I'm eating</i>	katekhu·ní<u>he</u>

3. Laryngeal Hop: h and ? are called laryngeal sounds because they are made far back in the mouth. Context forms ending in the combination -VRV? become -**VhRV** in their isolation form. It is as if the final glottal stop becomes an 'h' and hops in front of the resonant.

swahyo·wáne?	<i>apple</i>	swahyo·wá<u>hne</u>
o?wá·lu?	<i>meat</i>	o?wá<u>hlu</u>
wakhwístaya	<i>I have money</i>	wakhwístah<u>ya</u>

Compare this with the simple whispering type where the resonant is not whispered, that is, -VRV becomes -**VRV** in isolation:

ohkwa·lí	<i>bear</i>	ohkwa·<u>li</u>
awa·lá	<i>green</i>	awa·<u>la</u>
oskΛnu·tú	<i>deer</i>	oskΛnu·<u>tu</u>

4. Epenthesis: Context forms ending in the combination -VCRV? add an epenthetic vowel 'e' before the whispered syllable so that the isolation forms end in -**VCehRV**.

onutákli?	<i>sugar</i>	onutá<u>kehli</u>
owískla?	<i>white</i>	owís<u>kehla</u>

5. Disappearing 'y': Context forms ending in the combination -VCyV(?) with or without the final glottal stop turn into isolation forms ending in -VCih.

sátyΛ	<i>sit down</i>	sátih
kátsyΛ	<i>fish</i>	kátsih
takná'tsyu	<i>give me a kettle</i>	takná'tsih

6. Disappearing Dot: Context forms ending in the combination -V·CV(?) become -VhCV in their isolation form.

niwahsohkó'tΛ	<i>color</i>	niwahsohkóhtΛ
osahé'ta	<i>beans</i>	osahéhta

CONVERSATIONAL VOCABULARY

Here's some vocabulary for interacting with speakers about Oneida in Oneida:

náhte? Λkí·lu? _____	<i>How do I say _____ ?</i>
náhte? kΛ·túhe? _____	<i>What does _____ mean?</i>
tkaye·lí kΛ	<i>Is it correct?</i>
kátsa? ka·yΛ· tkaye· <u>li</u>	<i>Which one is correct?</i>
she·kú úskah	<i>one more time</i>
tutasátlatst	<i>do it again</i>
oskΛna?shú <u>ha</u>	<i>slowly</i>
tsí·lu ukwehuwehné <u>ha</u>	<i>speak in Oneida</i>
o?sluni?ké <u>ha</u>	<i>in English</i>
né· kΛ tsá·kat	<i>are they the same?</i>
katsa? ka·yΛ· akí·lu	<i>which one should I say?</i>
yawΛ?kó	<i>thank you</i>
yah te?wake?nikuhlayΛtá·u	<i>I don't understand</i>