

Series 1 – No.3 Even

Audioscript

Welcome to **Words Alive**. The **Words Alive** series helps with the pronunciation of, and listening to, words and their examples in the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. **Words Alive** is written and recorded by Richard Cauldwell, and brought to you by Cambridge University Press.

Part 1 Today's Word

Today's word is 'Even'. The dictionary gives seven entries for 'even' – we will work with the first one, 'even' in its 'surprise' meaning. The dictionary tells us that it is a two syllable word: 'even'. The dictionary says it means 'used to show that something is surprising, unusual, unexpected, or extreme'.

Part 2 Examples

There are four examples. As I say them, listen for the word 'even'. In three of the examples you will hear 'even''s meaning very strongly. In one you will hear 'even''s meaning to be much weaker.

Example 1

I don't even know where it is.

Example 2

Everyone I know likes the smell - even Mike does.

Example 3

We were all on time - even Chris and he's usually late for everything.

Example 4

It's a very difficult job - it might even take a year to finish it.

In which example was it most difficult for you to hear the word 'even'? I suspect it was in the second half of example number 4: 'it might even take a year to finish it.' In this example, 'even' is very short and quick and part of 'teven take a'. If we slow this down, we get 'TEVEN TAKE A'.

Part 3 Practice

Let's work with the second part of the fourth example at different speeds, to help with fluent pronunciation, and listening to natural speech. Imagine first that you are in a meeting, trying to persuade people that a project is impossible to complete, because it requires too much time. So say this example very emphatically, with five stresses:

Example 3A

// it MIGHT Even TAKE a YEAR to FINish it //

Now say it as if you are taking a more gentle approach to persuading people, with just four stresses:

Example 3B

// it might Even TAKE a YEAR to FINish it //

Now we are going to highlight just two words 'might' and 'year', keeping all the other words unstressed. Notice in particular that we not only have 'teven take a' unstressed, but also the words 'to finish it' are unstressed. We will do it at three different speeds: 120, 200, and 300 words per minute.

Example 3C

C1 // it MIGHT even take a YEAR to finish it // 120

C2// it MIGHT even take a YEAR to finish it // 200

C3// it MIGHT even take a YEAR to finish it // 300

The last version, at 300 words per minute, may seem too fast for you. But these kinds of speeds are very common in natural speech. And if you can match these speeds in your pronunciation practice, it will help you hear and understand when you are listening to real English. So two things to remember. First, the stretch of syllables between the highlighted words 'might' and 'word' begins with the last consonant of 'might': 'teventakea', 'teventakea', 'teventakea'. The second thing to remember is that after the last highlighted word, 'year', the words 'to finish it' carry the falling tone, and get quieter, and slow down: 'YEAR to finish it', 'YEAR to finish it', 'YEAR to finish it' - 'it MIGHT even take a YEAR to finish it'.

Part 4 Pairwork

To end with, let's add a reply which makes it clear that someone else in the meeting wants to continue talking:

Example 3D

A // it MIGHT even take a YEAR to finish it //

B // well LET'S disCUSS that //