

Different Stress and Intonation in Negotiations

Shifting stress in negotiating phrases

What is the normal stress in each of the sentences below? What other stress is possible, and how would it change the meaning?

- 1 ... is a step in the right direction.
- 2 According to our previous discussion,...
- 3 ... is our top priority.
- 4 Are there any alternatives?
- 5 Actually, that is basically what we were suggesting.
- 6 Another possible option is...
- 7 Can you give me some idea of...?
- 8 Hopefully our next meeting will be more productive.
- 9 How can we deal with this situation?
- 10 However, one condition of that proposal is...
- 11 I may have to back out of this deal unless...
- 12 I am not very happy with...
- 13 I am willing to accept that if...
- 14 I can move somewhat on that.
- 15 I can understand your position, but...
- 16 I can't promise anything.
- 17 I can't see any problem with that.
- 18 I can't see any way round this.
- 19 I don't think there's anything more to say.
- 20 I don't think we would benefit much from that.
- 21 I don't think we're making any progress here.
- 22 I don't want to turn this into a confrontation.
- 23 I don't have the authority to be able to...
- 24 I had a guarantee from you that...
- 25 I hope that meets with your approval.
- 26 I hope you can see our point of view.
- 27 I know we agreed on that but...
- 28 I might be willing to concede on that point.
- 29 I might have to back out of this deal unless...
- 30 I still think there is some hope for...
- 31 I think that will be acceptable.
- 32 I think we've found some common ground.
- 33 I understood that a discount was available.
- 34 I will confirm that later.

Use the suggestions for the meanings of the less common stress patterns on the next page to help you come up with the two possible versions.

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Hints

- 1 ... is a step in the right direction. –Only a step (so much more needed).
- 2 According to our previous discussion,... - Our present discussion is going to be different
- 3 ... is our top priority. –Probably different from your priority.
- 4 Are there any alternatives? – Anything at all?
- 5 Actually, that is basically what we were suggesting. – But not entirely what we were suggesting.
- 6 Another possible option is... - But might not be an option.
- 7 Can you give me some idea of...? – Even a little information would be great.
- 8 Hopefully our next meeting will be more productive. – Although this one was fairly productive.
- 9 How can we deal with this situation? – Not that situation.
- 10 However, one condition of that proposal is... - There is more than one.
- 11 I may have to back out of this deal unless... - But I probably won't.
- 12 I am not very happy with... - But I am fairly happy with it.
- 13 I am willing to accept that if... - But only if.
- 14 I can move somewhat on that. – But not too much.
- 15 I can understand your position, but... - But I can't accept it.
- 16 I can't promise anything. – Really no promises at all.
- 17 I can't see any problem with that. – Really no problems at all.
- 18 I can't see any way round this. – Really no way round it at all.
- 19 I don't think there's anything more to say. – So let's stop right now.
- 20 I don't think we would benefit much from that. – Although you might benefit from it.
- 21 I don't think we're making any progress here. – Really none.
- 22 I don't want to turn this into a confrontation. – Maybe you do.
- 23 I don't have the authority to be able to... – But my boss does.
- 24 I had a guarantee from you that... - Not just from someone in your company.
- 25 I hope that meets with your approval. – Someone else has already agreed to it.
- 26 I hope you can see our point of view. – Which is different from your point of view.
- 27 I know we agreed on that but... - But other people such as my boss had different opinions.
- 28 I might be willing to concede on that point. – But not the other points.
- 29 I might have to back out of this deal unless... - But other deals should probably be okay.
- 30 I still think there is some hope for... - But not much hope.
- 31 I think that will be acceptable. – But I'm not sure.
- 32 I think we've found some common ground. – But not much.
- 33 I understood that a discount was available. – Not just late payment.
- 34 I will confirm that later. – I can agree on everything else now.

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Changing intonation in negotiating phrases

Change the meaning of the phrases below by saying at least two different ways with two (at least partly or completely) different meanings.

Fine.

I see.

Okay.

We could accept that.

Brilliant!

I guess there's nothing we can do.

Hmmm, interesting proposal.

I suppose so.

Look at the descriptions below the fold of the different meanings and try to pronounce the words and expressions each of those ways.

Hints

Fine. – Happy/ Not happy.

I see. – Fine./ Not happy.

Okay. – Accepting./ Doubting.

We could accept that. – Positive./ Doubting.

Brilliant! – Positive./ Sarcastic, so negative.

I guess there's nothing we can do. – Accepting./ Giving up.

Hmmm, interesting proposal. – Positive./ Sarcastic/ doubting.

I suppose so. – Positive./ Doubtful.