

INSTRUCTION SYLLABICATION

Syllabication, or the breaking down of words into each uninterrupted unit of spoken language, is often taught in such a fragmented manner in materials that students are unable to pull all components together into a viable word analysis strategy. Research indicates that readers generally use sounds to determine syllable division. If this is the case, students must already know what the strategies are intended to teach.

Students who need to use syllabication to decode words must be taught syllabication rules holistically. When they apply basic rules in steps, they begin to recognize patterns and break down unknown words. Initially, the rules are applied to two-syllable rules. Once students learn the patterns, the same rules are used to break down longer words.

Even those students who read words with ease in context generally improve spelling accuracy if they become more cognizant of word structure and syllabication patterns.

STEP 1 – ASSURE THAT STUDENTS HAVE PREREQUISITE PHONICS SKILLS

Students should possess certain prerequisite skills and concepts before being taught the syllabication rules. Frequently, it is necessary to review short and long vowels, as well as prefixes/root words/suffixes, before proceeding with syllabication. You will see why as you review the following foundation concepts.

- Each syllable must contain a sounded vowel. It can be a single vowel sound (i•de•a) or used with one or more consonant sounds (be•gin).
- There are two kinds of syllables: open and closed. A closed syllable ends with a consonant and the vowel is usually short (or a schwa). An open syllable ends with a vowel that is generally long (clo•ver, e•vent). The vowel may be a y pronounced as /ē/ (fun•ny) or occasionally /ī/ (my•self).
- Since the first rule deals with dividing between root words and affixes, students must be familiar with prefixes, suffixes, and root words.
- Digraphs, or two consonants that make a single sound (ch, sh, th, wh, ng, nk, ng, ck, ...), cannot be divided (buck•le, noth•ing, cash•ier, bush•el, fur•ther).
- In some cases, blends are not divided (se•cret, mi•grate, ze•bra). Do not preteach since students discover this when identifying open vs. closed syllables.

STEP 2 – TEACH THE SYLLABICATION RULES AND APPLY IN ORDER

1. **PREFIX/ROOT/SUFFIX** – Check the word for prefixes and suffixes. The first step is to divide between affixes and the root word because this rule overrides the others.
2. **VC/CV** – Check for multiple consonants between vowels. Divide between consonants.
3. **V/CV** or **VC/V** – If the word has one consonant between vowels, decide whether the vowel before the consonant is short or long. If vowel is long, divide after the vowel leaving an open syllable. Otherwise, divide after the consonant leaving a closed syllable.

RESOURCE LIST **TWO-SYLLABLE WORDS**

P/R/S		VC/CV	
Identify and remove affixes.	pay•ment	Divide between consonants.	ham•ster
	peace•ful		hap•pen
	plant•ed		hel•lo
	play•ful	af•ter	hur•ry
art•ist	pre•view	ap•ple	kit•ten
be•side	quick•ly	bal•loon	let•ter
big•ger	real•ly	bas•ket	let•tuce
book•let	re•pay	blis•ter	lum•ber
boss•y	rest•ful	blos•som	mat•tress
breath•less	ros•y	bun•ny	mon•key
bump•y	sad•ly	but•ton	mon•ster
climb•ing	salt•y	can•dle	muf•fin
cloud•less	sleep•y	can•dy	nap•kin
count•less	slow•est	can•vas	pen•cil
cream•y	small•er	car•rot	pen•ny
dark•ness	smil•ing	car•toon	pic•ture
dear•est	soft•ly	cat•tle	pis•tol
dis•count	sog•gy	chan•nel	plas•tic
end•less	stop•ping	cof•fee	plen•ty
farm•er	sub•way	com•mon	prob•lem
fool•ish	sweet•er	com•pete	pup•py
friend•ly	tall•est	con•test	pur•ple
grace•ful	thank•ful	cot•ton	rab•bit
hot•ter	think•ing	cur•rent	rub•ber
itch•y	thirst•y	den•tist	scis•sors
joy•ous	throw•ing	diz•zy	sig•nal
like•ly	tract•or	el•bow	sil•ly
long•est	treat•ment	en•joy	sis•ter
love•ly	truth•ful	fan•cy	sub•ject
loud•er	un•fair	fif•teen	suf•fix
luck•y	up•ward	fol•low	thun•der
mis•spell	want•ed	for•get	tur•key
mis•take	warm•est	fun•ny	win•ter
morn•ing	wind•y	gen•tle	wis•dom
non•sense	wood•en	gos•sip	won•der
pain•less			

RESOURCE LIST **TWO-SYLLABLE WORDS**

VC/V		V/CV	
First syllable closed (short)	mag•ic	First syllable open (long)	ma•jor
	man•age		mi•nor
	med•al		mo•tor
	mel•on	a•pron	mu•sic
bod•y	met•al	ba•by	na•tion
both•er	min•ute	ba•con	no•tion
buck•et	mod•el	ba•sic	o•bey
cab•in	mon•ey	ba•sis	o•dor
cam•el	nick•el	be•gin	o•mit
chap•el	ol•ive	ca•ble	o•pen
cit•y	pan•ic	ce•ment	o•val
clev•er	ped•al	clo•ver	pa•per
clin•ic	pit•y	cra•dle	pi•lot
clos•et	plan•et	de•stroy	po•ny
col•umn	pres•ent	do•nate	pu•pil
com•ic	prof•it	du•ty	ra•zor
cop•y	pun•ish	ea•ger	rea•son
cred•it	quiv•er	e•qual	re•cess
dev•il	rap•id	e•ven	re•gard
drag•on	rel•ish	e•vent	re•sist
fig•ure	riv•er	fe•male	ro•tate
fin•ish	rob•in	fe•ver	ru•mor
for•est	sal•ad	fi•nal	se•cret
frag•ile	sev•en	fla•vor	si•lent
grav•el	shiv•er	glo•bal	si•ren
hab•it	shov•el	he•ro	so•da
hon•ey	stud•y	ho•tel	spi•der
im•age	tim•id	hu•man	stu•pid
leg•end	top•ic	hu•mor	su•per
lem•on	trag•ic	i•tem	ta•ble
lev•el	trav•el	la•bel	ti•ger
lil•y	trop•ic	la•bor	to•tal
lim•it	vis•it	la•dy	tu•na
liz•ard	wag•on	lo•cal	va•por
log•ic	wid•ow	lo•cate	ze•ro
mad•am			