

Tools for Instruction

Identify and Count Syllables

Proficient readers do not decode a long word by sounding each letter, but instead identify “chunks,” including syllables. A syllable is a word chunk that has one vowel sound. Developing readers learn to look for syllable patterns, including short-vowel VC/CV syllables (Vowel-Consonant/Consonant-Vowel), as in *rib/bon* and *con/test*. The purpose of teaching syllabication is to give students strategies for breaking a word apart. By breaking apart the words, students find parts that help them read the whole word.

Step By Step 20–30 minutes

1 Introduce syllables.

- Explain that the “beats” of a word are called syllables. Name several objects in the room, and demonstrate how to clap along to the beats of the syllables of each word. See the examples below.

win/dow desk waste/bas/ket stu/dent cal/en/dar

- Repeat each word and have students tell how many syllables they hear.
- Say *magnet* and have students tell how many syllables they hear. Display the word *magnet*, and label the vowels and consonants below the word. Point out that the vowels *a* and *e* are separated by two consonants.

m a g n e t
V C C V

- Say each syllable in *magnet*, as you use a finger to “scoop” under the letters *mag* and then *net*. Have students repeat each syllable before saying the whole word.
- Say, *A syllable has one vowel sound. This word has two syllables, because each vowel has a sound. Ask, What is the vowel sound you hear in mag? (/ă/) What is the vowel sound you hear in net? (/ĕ/)*
- Explain that breaking a word into syllables makes long words easier to read. Tell students that when they see a word with two consonants between two vowels, like *magnet*, the word can often be broken into syllables between the two consonants.

Support English Learners Make sure students understand the difference between the terms *consonant* and *vowel*. You may want to provide a list of vowels to help students remember. Also, choose words that name familiar objects, such as *basket* and *napkin*, for students to say syllable by syllable and then as a whole word.

2 Model identifying two syllables.

- Display two or three words in the VC/CV pattern, one at a time. Use the word list **Two-Syllable Words in the VC/CV Pattern** (page 3) to select words that are appropriate for your students.

absent discuss mitten picnic velvet

- Say the word aloud and ask students to count the number of syllables in the word.
- Have students help you label the vowels and consonants. Then display a slash between the two consonants: VC/CV. The slash shows where the word will be broken into syllables.

- Scoop your finger under the first syllable and then the second syllable, pronouncing each. Have students join in as you say each word, syllable by syllable, and then say the word naturally.
- Point out that vowel sounds may change when the whole word is said naturally; for example: the first syllable of *command* has the unstressed vowel sound called a schwa /ə /, rather than the short o sound, /ɒ/.
- Point out that when there are double consonants, the consonant sound is said only once.

3 Provide practice with identifying syllables.

- Display more words with the VC/CV syllable pattern, one at a time.
- Have students read the word and count the number of syllables.
- Direct students to copy the word, label the letters with VCCV, and draw a slash between the two consonants.
- Tell students to say the first syllable, and then the second. Ask, *When you put the syllables together, what word do you say? Can you show or tell what the word means?*

4 Provide practice with putting syllables together.

- Display several short-vowel syllables in two columns for students to match and put together to make real words. Have students say each syllable with you.
- Direct students to put one syllable from each column together to write a real word. When they have finished, read the words together. Discuss the meanings of the words.

nap	ton
bas	lect
cot	pet
col	kin
pup	ket

Check for Understanding

If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty determining where to divide the word into syllables	having students just listen to the word and clap the "beats" in it. Repeat this with several words. Then display a VC/CV word. Have students again say and clap the beats in the word. Guide students to label the vowels and consonants. Point out where the two consonants are together in the word and direct students to draw a slash between them. Have students read the two syllables and then the whole word.

Two-Syllable Words in the VC/CV Pattern

This word list includes two-syllable words in the VC/CV pattern with both short and long vowel sounds. Choose words and levels of difficulty that match your students' needs and abilities.

Short Vowels	absent	admit	basket	bottom	button
	cactus	cancel	canyon	channel	chipmunk
	collect	command	comment	commit	common
	conduct	connect	contact	content	contest
	cotton	discuss	disgust	disrupt	distant
	expand	expect	happen	index	insect
	insult	kitten	magnet	mammal	mitten
	napkin	pencil	picnic	plastic	pretzel
	problem	public	puppet	rabbit	random
	ribbon	seldom	splendid	sudden	tennis
	until	velvet			
Long Vowels and r-Controlled Vowels	accuse	admire	advice	advise	appear
	butter	canteen	center	collide	combine
	compare	compete	compute	confuse	contain
	correct	costume	dinner	dispose	entire
	escape	excite	excuse	exhale	fifteen
	fifty	follow	forty	happy	hollow
	ignite	inform	inhale	invite	Neptune
	obtain	party	pursue	shudder	silly
	sincere	sister	succeed	supper	suppose
	tadpole	thirty	thunder	whisper	yellow
	Compound Words	bedroom	bookcase	bookshelf	bookworm
football		oatmeal	pancake	popcorn	raincoat
rainstorm		roommate	snowball	snowflake	snowstorm
suitcase		sunlight	sunrise	sunset	