



Syllable Division Rules

Easy 3 Step Guide



Syllable Division Rules

Instructor's Guide

This guide is a supplement for the Silver Moon Spelling Rules® program. The following content is provided as a free electronic download with compliments from READ Learning Educational Services, LLC. Content is used in Silver Moon professional trainings and workshops.

Introduction

“Sound it out” is a common direction that students are given when they can’t read a word. “Sound it out” makes sense to most of us because it’s what most readers do when they can’t read a word. They sound it out. But, what if you don’t read like most readers? What if you are unable to read by sounding out? Or, what if “sounding it out” only works some of the time? That’s when you’ll see students relying on memory, picture clues, context clues, or guessing at words based on the shape and size of a given word or the first letter in the word. These strategies allow students to compensate for the inability to sound out words for a short period of time. After a while though, text will become too advanced for these strategies to work all the time.

Why Teach Syllable Division Rules

If a student can’t read by sounding out they typically hit a wall by the end of their third grade year, if not sooner. It’s around this time that reading emphasis shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. Vocabulary explodes and students are no longer able to “solve” words, or guess at words, by using strategies other than sounding out. This is why syllable division rules are necessary to teach. This process makes vowel sounds and other units of sound highly predictable which, in turn, makes unknown words easier to read.

What does the research say?

Brain research (modern neuroscience) has proven that struggling readers and spellers decode words using an indirect route in the brain. These children and adults have wiring in their brains that don’t allow them to read by sounding out – unless they are explicitly taught. Knowing how to apply syllable division rules and how to identify different types of syllables within words is essential.

When these skills are mastered, students will be able to read by sounding out. But, instead of saying, “sound it out” instructors will say, “divide that word”. Next they will ask what kind of syllables are in the word, and what vowel sounds they contain. Finally, they will say, “sound it out.” A surprising 15-20% of our population requires this type of systematic approach in order to read and spell words accurately.

The Spelling Connection

Many struggling readers also struggle with spelling because reading and spelling go hand in hand. These learners need to be taught step-by-step directions to divide words into syllables when reading (decoding) and to hear each and every syllable when spelling (encoding). When students are taught American English spelling rules, as part of their spelling program, they will be able to spell with a high degree of accuracy. Likewise, teaching students a rule based approach to spelling will improve their reading.

7 Types of Syllables

There are 7 types of syllables found in the American English Language. Request our **7 Types of Syllables Guide** at www.SilverMoonSpellingRules.com/store/. Use this guide to assist your teaching and enrich student learning.

How To Use This Guide

If you are using this guide with the Silver Moon Spelling Rules Program, you will find information on which types of syllables and which syllable division rules to instruct students in your instructor’s manual

Teach each rule separately, beginning with the first rule. Provide plenty of modeling and guided practice on real and nonsense words before asking the student to apply the rules independently. To improve self-confidence and mastery of material, only practice syllable division rules that contain syllable patterns the student has been taught.

See the following rules in an easy to read visual format. Download our **Visual Student Guide** at:

www.SilverMoonSpellingRules.com/store/

Syllable Division Rules

All steps need to be followed from left to right in the same direction we read. For words with more than two syllables, follow these steps from left to right and proceed by drawing the syllable division line between the first and second vowel, then the second and third vowel, next the third and fourth vowel, etc.

Step #1

1. It's all about the vowels. Every syllable contains at least one vowel. Identify the vowels. Label them by drawing a dot underneath them.

- Vowel teams* [see note on next page] are counted as one vowel and will only need one dot.
- Bossy R combinations marked as a vowel.
- Do not mark silent e. If e is silent it does not create another syllable by itself unless it is part of a consonant + le syllable.
- Dot the e in a consonant + le syllable.

ex: r**o**b**o**t

ex: r**i**v**e**r

Step #2

2. Underline all of the letters in-between the dotted vowels.

If there is 1 letter underlined...

a. Draw a vertical line in front of the letter. This will "push" the underlined letter to the end of the word creating two syllables.

b. If this doesn't make a word draw a vertical line in behind the letter. This will "push" the underlined letter to the front of the word creating two syllables.



• most common

ex: r**o** | b**o**t

• less common

ex: r**i**v | **e**r



If there are 2 letters underlined, "Split them" by drawing a vertical line in-between the letters. This pushes one of the letters toward the front and one toward the back.

Watch Out! Don't split digraphs or special units of sound* [see note on next page]

The letters R and L are called, "sticky seconds" or "rotten letters". If they are in the second letters' place, they will usually stay with the other letter instead of being split.



• most common

ex: t**a**f | **f**y

ex: t**e**a | **ch**e[®]r

ex: s**e** | **cr**e^t

Notes: ea is a vowel team and is marked once.
ch is a digraph and is not split apart
r in secret is a rotten letter

If there are three letters underlined, give them a "1, 2 split."

Draw a vertical line after the first letter and in front of the last two underlined letters. If there is a unit or digraph, do not split them apart; instead, treat them as one letter.



ex: c**o**n | **tr**a**ct**

ex: g**o**ld | **l**e**n**

If there are four letters underlined... a. give them a "1, 3 split."

Draw a vertical line after the first letter and in front of the last three underlined letters. If there is a unit or digraph, do not split them apart; instead, treat them as one letter.



ex: **i**n | **str**u**ct**

• note: in is a prefix

ex: **r**e | **co**n | **str**u**ct**

• note: re and con are prefixes

Step #3

Determine syllable types and what sounds the vowels will make.

Mark the vowel sounds using the correct diacritical mark (long, short, schwa, etc). Sound out each syllable and read the word. Compound words don't need these rules. Identify and pull the individual words apart.



compound word ex:
s**a**nd | b**o**x

Syllable Division Rules

Marking Vowels:

- Long vowel
- ˘ Short vowel
- ing unit sound
- ə Schwa (upside down e, pronounced /u/)
- Ⓡ Bossy R
- ∅ Silent e
- c+le Consonant + le

Helpful Hints

When teaching these rules, avoid relying solely on directionality terms such as left and right. Many students are confused about left and right even after years of reminders. Instead, pair your directions with visuals and movement. For example, use your hands to gesture toward the end of the word. When you say, “split them” make a splitting motion bringing your thumbs together and away from each other. Whatever cues you choose, use them with consistency.

Give a copy of the Visual Student Guide to students. Allow them to use the guide as a visual reminder of the syllable division rules.

A Note About...

*Vowel Teams

Watch out for vowel combinations that begin with i and u. If a vowel combination starts with either of these letters, it may not create a true vowel team. Remember a vowel team is two vowels that make one sound. If it appears that a word has a vowel team, but the vowels each say a sound, then draw a line between the vowels when dividing words into syllables. Each vowel will be in its own syllable.

Prefixes

When dividing words with prefixes, the prefix will always be in its own syllable. You can draw a syllable division line after the prefix and before the first letter in the base-word. A vowel at the end of a prefix will never create a vowel team with a vowel at the beginning of a base-word.

Terms

Unit : A term used to describe three or four letters that say an unexpected sound. Basic units look like closed syllables, except the vowel doesn't say its short vowel sound, as it would in a closed syllable. When a unit is present within a word, it creates a unit syllable. Some units end in silent e and are called silent e units.

The following letter combinations are “units” of sound. They should be directly taught and memorized. Units are never split apart when dividing words into syllables.

3 Letter Units	Silent E Units	4 Letter Units
ang, ing, ong, ung ank, ink, onk, unk all, oll, old, olt, ost, ild, ind	ice, ace, age, ite, ive, ine, ate	tion, sion ture, sure

Digraphs are two letters that make one sound. Digraphs are never split apart when dividing a word into syllables. Digraphs include but are not limited to: sh, ch, th, ph, wh, ck, si, ci, ti, kn, wr, mb, gh, gn

Trigraphs are three letters that make one sound. Trigraphs are also never split apart when dividing words into syllables. Trigraphs include but are not limited to: dge, igh, tch'

***Diphthongs** are two letters that make a sliding sound. Diphthongs are not split apart when dividing words into syllables. Examples of diphthongs include: oi as in oil, oy as in boy, ou as in out

Syllable Division Rules

Notes/Examples:

Use this page to record examples while attending the Silver Moon Spelling Spelling Rules professional trainings and workshops.