

Phonics Rules

SYLLABLE TYPES

Each syllable will have one vowel sound. Understanding and applying these 6 syllable types will help students to decode many unknown words. Just remember the term CLOVER.

(V=vowel C=consonant /=break in syllables)

- **C**losed (VC or VCC)
A vowel followed by one or more consonants at the end of a syllable or word is a closed syllable. The consonant closes the vowel in and always makes it short. (ex: it, hat, cat/nip, hand/stand)
- Consonant **L**e (C-le)
If “le” comes at the end of the word and is preceded by a consonant, it forms its own syllable. Words with this syllable type will be at least 2 syllables. (ex: can/dle: dle is the syllable, trou/ble, bub/ble, jun/gle)
- **O**pen (CV)
When a vowel is at the end of the syllable, it is an open syllable and makes the vowel long. The vowel is able to stretch out and say its own name. (ex: hi, o/pen (open and closed syllable), va/ca/tion)
- **V**owel Pairs (VV)
When two vowels are together, they make one sound in the syllable. One example is “When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking.” This means the first vowel says its name or is long while the second vowel is silent. (ex: mean, steal, tie) This rule doesn’t always apply as with anything in English. (ex: moon, head, field, steak) But the two vowels will still make just one sound together.
- Silent **E** (VCe)
A vowel followed by a consonant and an e at the end of a syllable makes the vowel long. It is sometimes called “magic e” or “bossy e.” The bossy e can reach back around one consonant and boss the vowel to say its name to make it long. (ex: make - the e reaches around the k and tells the a to say its name, so the a is long)
When a suffix is added, the vowel in the suffix takes over the job of the silent e. (ex: making - the i becomes the bossy vowel and makes the a long in addition to being part of the –ing; hope becomes hoped – the –ed takes the place of the silent e and makes the o long)
If there is more than one consonant between the e and the vowel, it can’t reach the vowel and the e would be part of a second syllable. (cracker - The e can only reach past the k, and the c or any other consonant won’t be bossed around by a silent e. The a is part of a closed syllable, and the e is part of the bossy R syllable. crack/er)
one sound together.
- Bossy **R** (Vr)
A vowel followed by r is bossed around and changes its sound. (ex: ar like star, or like short; er, ir, ur all make the same sound as in her, bird, turn)
- *** SCHWA - When a vowel makes a grunting sound like a caveman (“uh”), it is a schwa sound. (ex: hover, again, bottom, celebrate)
- There is also a great ‘Syllabication Rules’ list on page 43 in The Reading Teacher’s Book of Lists, 4th ed., 2000, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. for more information on breaking words to decode.

Phonics Rules for Special Sounds or Multiple Spellings

(/ in a word = syllable break; a letter between /-/ signals the sound of that spelling)

- On the Wonders Sound Cards if there is a horizontal line after the spelling, the sound will be at the beginning of the syllable and another sound must follow. If the line is before the spelling, the sound will be at the end of the syllable with something coming before it.
- **Long A**
 - a by itself at the end of the syllable is an open syllable and is a long vowel sound (pa/per)
 - a_e is the silent e syllable - when using this spelling, there will always be at least one more consonant sound between the a and e (snake)
 - _ay is always at the end of a syllable (play, stay/ing)
 - ai_ will be in the beginning or middle of the word (train, aim)
 - ea (break)
 - ei is actually the eigh spelling (neigh, weight, eight)
- **C or K**
 - ck is used when preceded by a short vowel and comes at the end of a closed syllable. (ex: stack, sick, clock). C will usually make the hard sound. It will make the soft /s/ sound when followed by e, i, or y (signal letters).
- **Short E**
 - e or ea - there is no rule – use “which one looks right?”
- **Long E**
 - e by itself at the end of the syllable is an open syllable and is a long vowel sound (he, me, we)
 - e_e is the silent e syllable - when using this spelling, there will always be at least one more consonant sound between the e's (these)
 - ea (stream) (can also be short e as in bread)
 - ee (tree)
 - _y comes at the end of the word and is a long e sound if the word has two or more syllables. The final syllable with the y will be an unaccented syllable. (ba/by, sha/dy, money, funny, many)
 - _ie_ is in the middle of a word (field); if at the end of the word, it will be a long i sound
 - _ey comes at the end of the syllable (key, mon/key)
- **F or PH** - no rule, has to do with its origin
- **G** – It becomes a soft g (/j/ as in giant) when it's followed by e, i, or y (signal letters) - exceptions include words like gift
- **H** - /h/ will always be at the beginning of the syllable
- **Long I**
 - i is at the end as an open syllable (hi)
 - _y is a long i sound if it is at the end of a one syllable word (by, my, try, fly) or if in a multisyllabic word it will be the accented syllable at the end of the word (July, apply, rely, supply, comply)
 - i_e is the silent e syllable - when using this spelling, there will always be at least one more consonant sound between the i and e (mile)
 - igh will be in the middle or end of the word (high, might)
 - ie is at the end of a one syllable word (pie, tie)
- **J** - _dge will always have a short vowel before it; signal letters (e, i, y) after g will make it say /j/.
- **K** - see above for C

- **L** - _le syllable at the end of a word makes the /l/ sound; there will be a consonant in the position before le
- **N** – kn and gn will be at the beginning of the syllable (knight, gnaw)
- **Long O**
o is at the end as an open syllable (ho, no, so)
oa is part of a vowel team syllable and will be at the beginning or middle of a syllable
ow is at the end of a syllable (snow, mow)
o_e is the silent e syllable – when using this spelling, there will always be at least one more consonant sound between the o and e (bone)
_oe is at the end of the syllable (toe)
- **R** – wr_ will be at the beginning of the syllable
- **S** - the signal letters after c will make it soft and say the /s/ sound
- **Long U**
u is at the end as an open syllable (hu/man, mu/sic, pu/pil)
u_e is the silent e syllable – when using this spelling, there will always be at least one more consonant sound between the u and the e (cube)
_ew is at the end of a syllable
_ue is at the end of a syllable
- **W** - /w/ will always be at the beginning of the syllable
- **X** - /ks/ will always have a short vowel sound before it (ox)
- **Y**- as a consonant will always be at the beginning of a syllable
- **Z** - s added at the end of a word can say /z/
- **TH** – can be unvoiced (thumb, three) or voiced (the, these)
- **CH** - It will be ch unless there is a short vowel right before. A short vowel followed by /ch/ will be spelled tch.
- **WH** - will always be at the beginning of the syllable
- **NG** - always follows a short vowel and can change the vowel sound. a changes to long a (sang), i changes to long e (sing), o and u keep their own short sounds (song, sung). E is not a vowel that will be with ng.
- **Bossy R**
er, ir, ur – no rule; ‘or’ is used at the end of a verb to make it a person (editor, visitor)
or – no rule: oar, or, ore (soar, cork, more)
- **OW** - usually is at the end of the syllable
OU will be at the beginning followed by a consonant (couch, out)
- **OI** – will be at the beginning or middle of the syllable (coil, oink)
OY will be at the end of the syllable (boy, joy)
- **OO** like spoon is the long oo
oo can be anywhere in the word (oops, cool, too)
u_e will be at the end of the syllable (rude, tube, chute)
u
_ew will be at the end of the syllable (flew)
ue (blue, clue, Tuesday)
ou is in the middle of the syllable (soup)
ui is in the middle of the syllable (fruit, suit)
- **OO** as in book is the short oo and will fall in the middle of a word
(the u in put also makes this sound)

- **AW like straw**

a (ha ha)

aw is anywhere in the word (awful, lawn, paw)

au is at the beginning or middle of the word (author, because, pause)

ough (taught)

al is often found before a k at the end of the syllable (talk, walk, stalk) but can be used in other ways (always)

- **AIR like chair** – no rule

air (chair, fairy)

are (careful, square)

ear (wear, pear, tear)

ere (there, where)

- **-ED**

This suffix can make 3 sounds: /d/, /t/, or /ed/. /d/ is a voiced sound; you can feel your throat move as you make the sound. /t/ is an unvoiced sound; it just blows air.

If the sound right before the -ed ending is also a voiced sound, the ending will be the /d/ voiced sound (ex: moved, begged, copied, used).

If the sound right before the -ed ending is unvoiced, the ending will also be unvoiced and will say /t/ (ex: jumped, baked, washed).

If the sound right before the -ed ending is either /d/ or /t/ which are the other two sounds used, that is the only time the -ed will say /ed/ (ex: planted, crowded, educated, exploded).

Remember that it's the sound - not necessarily the letter - that precedes the ed.

Voiced sounds: all vowels, b, g, j, l, m, n, r, v, z, th

Unvoiced sounds: c, f, k, p, s, x, sh, ch, th

(Some letters are not included in this list since their sounds are only used at the beginning of the word and not at the end with a suffix. d and t are not in this list since they will always cause the ending to be said /ed/.)