

A Crash Course in Polysyllables

A Crash Course in Polysyllables: featuring excerpts from Don Potter's Blend Phonics Reader and 1908 Webster Speller and thephonicspage's syllable division rules and exercises. (www.donpotter.net; www.thephonicspage.org.)

For more practice with syllables, you can download the original full length documents at the websites listed above. There is also a great wealth of other spelling and phonics information, documents, and movies available at both websites.

1. Syllables and words ending in a consonant are pronounced with a short vowel sound.

red set sit sat tell till beg bag bog bug big box
an at Ed in it on Oz up us

ab eb ib ob ub
an en in on un
at et it ot ut

2. Divide between 2 consonants; syllables ending in a consonant are short.

puppet sunset sudden combat magnet admit enter

3. Consonant Blends. Divide before and after blends.

lamp lump dump damp bump rust rest sent

amp emp imp omp ump
and end ind ond und

sunspot handcuff landmass sandbag endless dogsled

4. Words and syllables ending in a vowel are pronounced with a long vowel sound. (When y is a vowel, it acts as an i.) Words ending in a have the sound ah as in father (fa, la, ma, pa). Syllables ending in a are long. (So, the syllable ma is pronounced may, as in the word ma-ker.) Divide before 1 consonant, syllables ending in a vowel are long.

he me be she hi pi go no so mu

ba be bi bo bu by
ma me mi mo mu my

timer grader hijack cupid motor liken maker diner meter

5. Divide between words. (C is hard at the end of a syllable or a word.)

da de di do du dy
bla ble bli blo blu bly
ac ec ic oc uc
ad ed id od ud

mailman seashore freeway maintain beehive skydive

6. Soft C and G before e, i, and y. Divide between 2 consonants, before 1 consonant, before blends. (Single sounds like ph, sh, and ch will not divide between letters, they divide like a single letter.)

ca ce ci co cu cy
sca sçe sçi sco scu sçy
ga ge gi go gu gy

cider cadence cipher caper cistern capstone citric catnip

7. Words ending in *le* divide 1 letter before *le*, words ending in *el* divide directly before *el*.

ak	ek	ik	ok	uk	
ka	ke	ki	ko	ku	ky
la	le	li	lo	lu	ly

battle axel sizzle novel ripple apple jewel quibble

8. Divide between 2 vowels for vowels that don't normally divide, some Latin exceptions.

cha	che	chi	cho	chu	chy
sha	she	shi	sho	shu	shy
ap	ep	ip	op	up	

radio cameo pioneer meow fiord pliable reliant truant

9. Divide between 2 consonants, divide before 1 consonant. (Hard *g* and *c* at end.)

ag	eg	ig	og	ug	
ga	ge	gi	go	gu	gy
ac	ec	ic	oc	uc	
ca	ce	ci	co	cu	cy

gapping, gaping; mitten, miter; bonnet, bonus; musket, music

10. Divide after prefixes, before suffixes.

ra	re	ri	ro	ru	ry
pra	pre	pri	pro	pru	pry
an	en	in	on	un	

prefix decide before unfit cooperate useful thankfulness

11. Words of 2 syllables. Accented syllables are bolded. Unaccented syllables often schwa. The letter *e* will sometimes “schwa” to a short *i* sound, as in *fillet* (pronounced *fillit*.) The letters *a* and *o* are most likely to schwa, and words beginning with an unaccented *a* almost always schwa. Final unaccented syllables schwa often.

ax	ex	ix	ox	ux	
cra	cre	cri	cro	cru	cry

From Webster’s table 32, words of 2 syllables, accented on the second:

a-bāse, de-base, en-case, de-bate, se-date, cre-ate, ob-late

Strong drink will **debase** a man. Hard shells **encase** clams and oysters.

From Webster’s table 44, words of 2 syllables, accented on the first:

ban-quet, gus-set, rus-set, cos-set, çiv-et, riv-et, vel-vet

Cotton velvet is very soft to feel.

12. Words of 3 syllables. An accented *y* at the end of a word will have its long sound of *i*, as in *deny*. An unaccented *y* at the end of a word will be pronounced with a long *e* sound.

av	ev	iv	ov	uv	
va	ve	vi	vo	vu	vy
fra	fre	fri	fro	fru	fry
qua	que	qui	quo		

From Webster’s table 54, words of 3 syllables, accented on the first.

bot-a-nÿ, el-e-ġy, prod-i-ġy, ef-fi-ġy, eb-o-ny, en-er-ġy

Botany is the science of plants. An elegy is a funeral song. A prodigy is something very wonderful. An effigy is an image or likeness of a person.

From Webster's table 75, words of 3 syllables, accented on the second.

ar-**rī**-val, ap-**prōv**-al, co-**ē**-val, re-**fu**-sal, re-**pri**-sal

We often wait for the arrival of the mail. Coeval signifies of the same age. Reprisal is seizing anything from an enemy in retaliation.

13. Words of 4 syllables.

az	ez	iz	oz	uz	
spla	sple	spli	splō	splu	sply
spra	spre	spri	spro	spru	spry

From Webster's table 67, words of 4 syllables, primary accent on the first

lu-mi-na-rÿ, **cu**-li-na-ry, **mo**-ment-a-ry

The sun is the brightest luminary.

From Webster's table 79, words of 4 syllables, accented on the second.

an-**nu**-i-tÿ, me-**mo**-ri-al, ad-**ju**-di-cate, e-**lu**-ci-date

Gravestones are placed by graves, as memorials of the dead.

From Webster's table 100, words of 4 syllables, accented on the second.

ad-**vent**-ūr-oŭs, a-**non**-y-mous, sÿ-**non**-y-mous, un-**ġen**-er-ous

An anonymous author writes without signing his name to his composition. Synonymous words have the same signification. Very few words in English are exactly synonymous.

14. Words of 5 syllables.

am em im om um
swa swe swi swo swu swy

From Webster's table 90, words of 5 syllables, accented on the second.

trī-**en**-ni-al, līx-**iv**-i-al, mil-**lĕn**-ni-al, quād-**ren**-ni-al,
per-**en**-ni-al, sep-**ten**-ni-al, sex-**ten**-ni-al, ter-**res**-tri-al

A triennial assembly is one that continues three years, or is held once in three years. The Parliament of Great Britain is septennial, that is, formed once in seven years.¹

From Webster's table 102, words of 5 syllables, accented on the second.

con-**tem**-po-ra-rĕ, ex-**tem**-po-ra-ry, de-**roġ**-a-to-ry

Addison and Pope were contemporary authors, that is, they lived at the same time. A love of trifling amusements is derogatory to Christian character.

15. Words of 7 syllables.

From Webster's table 121, words of 7 syllables, accented on the fifth.

im-ma-te-ri-**āl**-i-tĕ, in-di-vis-i-**bĭl**-i-ty, in-di-vid-u-**āl**-i-ty,
in-com-pat-i-**bil**-i-ty, in-de-struc-i-**bil**-i-ty, im-per-cep-ti-**bil**-i-ty

The immateriality of the soul has rarely been disputed. The indivisibility of matter is supposed to be demonstrably false. It was once a practice in France to divorce husband and wife for incompatibility of tempers; a practice soon found to be incompatible with social order.

¹ The Septennial Act has been amended and the term is currently 5 years.
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Answers to Syllable Division Exercises

2. *Divide between 2 consonants; syllables ending in a consonant are short.*

pup-pet sun-set sud-den com-bat mag-net ad-mit en-ter

3. *Consonant Blends. Divide before and after blends.*

sun-spot hand-cuff land-mass sand-bag end-less dog-sled

4. *Divide before 1 consonant, syllables ending in a vowel are long.*

ti-mer gra-der hi-jack cu-pid mo-tor li-ken ma-ker di-ner me-ter

5. *Divide between words. (C is hard at the end of a syllable or a word.)*

mail-man sea-shore free-way main-tain bee-hive sky-dive

6. *Soft C and G before e, i, and y. Divide between 2 consonants, before 1 consonant, before blends. (Single sounds like ph, sh, and ch will not divide between letters, they divide like a single letter.)*

ci-der ca-dence ci-pher ca-per cis-tern cap-stone cit-ric cat-nip

7. *Words ending in le divide 1 letter before le, words ending in el divide directly before el.*

bat-tle ax-el siz-zle nov-el rip-ple ap-ple jew-el quib-ble

8. *Divide between 2 vowels for vowels that don't normally divide, some Latin exceptions.*

ra-di-o cam-e-o pi-o-neer me-ow fi-ord pli-a-ble re-li-ant tru-ant

9. *Divide between 2 consonants, divide before 1 consonant. (Hard g and c at end.)*

gap-ping, ga-ping; mit-ten, mi-ter; bon-net, bo-nus; mus-ket, mu-sic

10. *Divide after prefixes, before suffixes.*

pre-fix de-cide be-fore un-fit co-op-er-ate use-ful thank-ful-ness