

Word of the Week

systematic (sis' tə ma' tik) *adj.*,
ordered; planned

The teacher was *systematic* in his approach to grading essays.

The word *systematic* can be broken down into four syllables (*sys-te-mat-ic*). It contains one open syllable (*te*) and three closed syllables (*sis*, *mat*, and *ik*). This lesson will give you more in-depth information about syllables.

Tip A **syllable** is a word part that contains a single vowel sound. It is a "chunk" of sound.

Tip The **short vowel sounds** are:

/a/ **cat**, /e/ **bet**, /i/ **bin**, /o/ **got**,
/u/ **up**

The **long vowel sounds** are:

/ā/ **mate**, /ē/ **be**, /ī/ **time**, /ō/ **go**,
/ū/ **super**

Other sounds:

/û/ **foot**, /ô/ **off**, /ou/ **out**, /oi/ **boy**

The schwa:

/ə/ extra**a**, open**e**n, actor**a**, able**e**

LESSON 3

Syllables and Vowel Sounds

Understand the Concept

A **syllable** is a part of a word that contains a single vowel sound. All words have at least one syllable. The following are one-syllable words. Listen as you pronounce each word. You should hear only one vowel sound, even if there is more than one vowel. Which vowel sounds do you hear?

EXAMPLES reign, seal, bite, coat, stew

Here are some words with more than one syllable. Read them aloud to yourself. How many vowel sounds can you hear in each word?

EXAMPLES sub-ject (2 syllables)
he-ro-ic (3 syllables)
ge-ol-o-gy (4 syllables)
in-ev-i-ta-ble (5 syllables)

There are different types of syllables. Certain syllables may tend to have different vowel sounds.

1. **Closed syllable:** a single vowel is followed by a consonant. The consonant ends, or "closes," the syllable. The vowel sound is usually short.
den, san • dal, pic • nic
2. **Open syllable:** ends in a single vowel. The vowel sound is usually long.
go, be, cra • zy
3. **R-controlled syllable:** the syllable contains a vowel followed by an *r*. The vowel sound is controlled by the *r*.
worm, bar • ber, mur • mur
4. **Vowel team syllable:** the syllable contains two vowels that combine to make one vowel sound. Such "vowel teams" include *ai*, *ay*, *ea*, *ee*, *oa*, *ow*, *oo*, *oi*, *oy*, *ou*, *ie*, and *ei*.
boat, bead, hey • day
5. **Vowel-silent e syllable:** ends in a silent *e*. The silent *e* makes the other vowel in the syllable "say its name" (have a long vowel sound).
note, made, scene
6. **Consonant-le syllable:** the syllable contains a consonant plus *-le*. It always comes at the end of a word. The vowel sound is a schwa.
no • ble, ap • ple, lit • tle

Try It Yourself

EXERCISE A

Divide each of the following words into syllables, listening for the vowel sound in each syllable. Then, identify the types of syllables in the word.

EXAMPLE cuddle
 cud / dle: closed syllable, consonant-*le* syllable

1. rotate

2. pudgy

3. system

4. eagle

5. particular

EXERCISE B

Sort the following words into two groups according to whether the first vowel sound is long or short. Then, look at the consonants, vowels, and syllables in each word and tell whether you notice a pattern. Write your responses in your notebook.

acorn	dictate	meter
attic	foggy	open
better	gymnast	rumor
crying	idol	sunny

Just for Fun

Read these nonsense words. How do you know which have a short or long vowel sound? Identify a real word that rhymes with each one.

yog
nin
lave
dipdat
shule

Tip Vowels can sound different when they are followed by an *r*. The *r* “controls” the vowel sound. See how the vowel sound changes when an *r* is added in the examples below.

stab → star

pen → per

fix → fir

on → or

bun → burn

Tip If a word has two consonants in the middle, it is usually divided between consonants. The first syllable is closed, and the vowel sound is short.

hop / ping, lad / der

If a word has only one consonant, it is usually divided before the consonant. The first syllable is open, and the vowel sound is long.

ho / ping, la / dle

Consult a dictionary for help if you have trouble deciding where to divide a word into its syllables.