

Eye, my, mine

Introducing syllables

A

We can divide a word into one or more syllables. For example *mum* has one syllable, *mother* has two syllables and *grandmother* has three syllables. A syllable is a group of one or more sounds. The essential part of a syllable is a vowel sound (V). Some syllables are just one vowel sound. For example, these words have one syllable, and the syllable is just one vowel sound: eye /aɪ/, owe /əʊ/.

A syllable can have consonant sounds (C) before the V, after the V or before and after the V. Here are some more examples (they are all words of one syllable).

CV	VC	CVC
go /gəʊ/	if /ɪf/	ten /ten/
my /maɪ/	egg /eg/	nose /nəʊz/
know /nəʊ/	ice /aɪs/	mouth /maʊθ/
weigh /weɪ/	eight /eɪt/	knife /naɪf/

⚠ Note: There may be *more* than one C before or after the V. (See Units 24, 25.)

B

Remember that letters are *not* the same as sounds. For example, the consonant letters W and Y are not consonant *sounds* if they come after the vowel sound in the syllable e.g. *saw*, *say*. They are part of the vowel sound. In some accents, for example South East English, the same is true for the consonant letter R. Here are some more examples. They are words of one syllable and they all have the pattern CV.

how /haʊ/ law /lɔ:/ pay /peɪ/ why /waɪ/ car /kɑ:/ hair /heə/

C

Some people use the word *syllable* to talk about the parts of a written word. But in this book, the word *syllable* is used to talk about the *pronunciation* of words, not the writing. For example, in writing we can divide 'chocolate' into three parts like this: cho-co-late. But when we say the word, we pronounce only two syllables, like this: chocolate /tʃɒk.lət/. (The dot shows where the two syllables are divided.) A number of other words may be pronounced with fewer syllables than in writing. Listen to these examples.

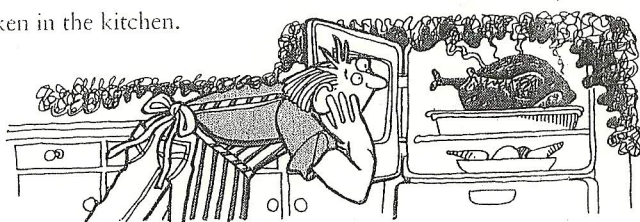
- B1 chocolate /tʃɒk.lət/ different /ˈdɪf.rənt/ interesting /ˈɪn.trəs.tɪŋ/
 general /dʒen.rəl/ comfortable /ˈkɒmf.tə.bəl/ secretary /ˈsek.rə.tɪ/

D

The first syllable in these words has the same three sounds, but in the opposite order: kitchen /ˈkɪtʃ.ɪn/ – chicken /ˈtʃɪk.ɪn/.

If a sentence has similar-sounding syllables like this in it, it may be difficult to say. These sentences are called 'tongue-twisters'. Listen to this example.

- B2 Richard checked the chicken in the kitchen.



⚠ Note: You can find more about syllables in Units 24 to 27.

Exercises

- 21.1 Write these words in the correct column.

aunt cook dad doctor grandfather officer
 passenger sister teacher uncle

1 syllable	2 syllables	3 syllables
aunt		

- 21.2 Look at these one-syllable words. Write C where there is a consonant sound. There may be one before V, after V or in both places.

- EXAMPLES high C V 5 through V
 rice C V C 6 laugh V
 1 bought V 7 two V
 2 eyes V 8 youth V
 3 key V 9 weigh V
 4 day V 10 rhyme V

- 21.3 The spelling changes if you change the order of sounds in these one-syllable words from CV to VC. Write the missing words.

- | CV | VC |
|---------------------|-------------|
| EXAMPLE /lɔ:/ = law | /ɔ:l/ = all |
| 1 /deɪ/ = | /eɪd/ = aid |
| 2 /nəʊ/ = | /əʊn/ = own |
| 3 /peɪ/ = | /eɪp/ = ape |
| 4 /ti:/ = tea | /i:t/ = |
| 5 /meɪ/ = may | /eɪm/ = |
| 6 /seɪ/ = | /eɪs/ = ace |

- 21.4 Read the text aloud. Record your voice if you can. Then listen to the recording. Did you say the same number of syllables in the underlined words as on the recording?

I went to an interesting restaurant on Wednesday. First I had chicken with a lot of different vegetables. Then I had a piece of chocolate cake. In general, I don't like chocolate, but the cake was lovely.

- 21.5 Listen to these tongue-twisters. How many syllables are there in each? Write the number. Then listen again and repeat.

- EXAMPLE She sells sea shells on the sea shore. = 8 syllables
- 1 Walter walked towards the waiter. =
- 2 Betty bought a better bit of butter. =
- 3 The fat cat sat on the vet's wet hat. =