

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Layers of Language:
Anglo-Saxon Syllable Patterns

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~ **Module 13, Session 5** ~
Handout

Syllable Types

Teachers and their students need to know the six major syllable types and the predominant patterns for syllable division since readers become exposed to multisyllabic words in the early grades. The major types of syllables are (a) closed, (b) vowel-consonant-e, (c) open, (d) vowel pair, (e) consonant –le, and (f) –r controlled. Closed syllables, alone, make up 43% of syllables in English words. Open syllables and closed syllables together account for almost 75% of English syllables (Stanback, 1992).

Syllable Types

CLOSED – Teachers introduce closed syllables first. In these syllables, the single vowel has a consonant after it, making the vowel sound “short” (e.g., *map, sit, cub, stop, bed*).

VOWEL-CONSONANT-E – The final e in a vowel-consonant-e (VCE) syllable makes the vowel “long” (e.g., *made, time, cute, vote, Pete*).

OPEN – An open syllable contains a vowel at the end of the syllable, and the vowel usually makes its long sound.

VOWEL PAIR – A vowel pair (or vowel team, or vowel digraph) syllable contains two adjacent vowels in a syllable as in *rain, green, coil, and pause*.

CONSONANT –LE - A syllable ending in –le is usually preceded by a consonant that is part of that syllable. For example, *bugle* has a long *u* because the *gle* stays together, making an open syllable, *bu*. *Tumble*, in contrast, contains *tum* and *ble*, with *tum* being a closed syllable. *Little* requires two *t*'s to keep the *i* in *lit* short.

-R CONTROLLED - -r controlled vowels often lose their identity as long or short, and are co articulated with the *r* as in *star, corn, fern, church, and firm*.

Syllable Division

Students need to learn some common rules for syllable division in order to make multisyllabic words easier to read and spell. By understanding and practicing the various syllable types in monosyllables first, readers will recognize common syllable types as they learn to divide words into syllables. Students should practice dividing words into syllables such as:

VC/CV	rab/bit	cam/pus	nap/kin	hob/gob/lin
V/CV	o/pen	pi/lot	cu/pid	ho/bo
VC/V	cab/in	plan/et	cam/el	ban/ish
CV/VC	cre/ate	po/em	po/et	the/ol/o/gy

Adapted from M. K. Henry (1999, 2003)