

Six Syllable Types, and How to Split a Word

Syllable types tell a reader what the vowel will say. Division patterns tell them where to break a long word. Together they turn "I can't read that" into a plan.

Start here: every syllable has exactly one vowel sound. Count vowel sounds, not vowel letters. *Boat* has two vowel letters and one vowel sound, so it is one syllable.

Closed

One vowel, closed in by at least one consonant. The vowel is usually short.

cat, sit, nap·kin, rab·bit

Open

The syllable ends in one vowel. The vowel is usually long.

go, me, hi, ba·by, mu·sic

Vowel-consonant-e

A vowel, one consonant, then a final e. The first vowel is long and the e is silent.

cake, bike, home, cute, in·side

Vowel team

Two or more letters work together to spell one vowel sound.

rain, feet, boat, coin, cow, saw, rain·bow

R-controlled

A vowel followed by r. The r changes the vowel's sound.

car, her, bird, fork, turn, gar·den

Consonant-le

A consonant plus le at the end of a word. The e is silent. Count back three letters to find it.

ta·ble, puz·zle, lit·tle, can·dle

Some programs count seven types, splitting out diphthongs or other stable endings like -tion. Use whatever your program uses, consistently.

Where to split

Pattern	What to do	Examples
VC/CV	Two consonants between the vowels: split between them. Keep digraphs like sh, ch, th and ck together.	rab / bit , nap / kin , pic / nic
V/CV	One consonant between the vowels: try splitting before it first. The first syllable is open, so its vowel is long.	ro / bot , ti / ger , mu / sic
VC/V	If V/CV doesn't make a real word, split after the consonant. The first syllable is closed, so its vowel is short.	cab / in , lem / on , rob / in
VC/CCV VCC/CV	Three consonants between the vowels: keep the blend or digraph together and split on the other side.	mon / ster , hun / dred , pan / ther
V/V	Two vowels side by side that are not a team: split between them.	li / on , di / et , po / em
C+le	Count back three letters from the end and split there.	ta / ble , sim / ple , bub / ble

A routine students can run alone

- 1 Find the vowels and mark them.
- 2 Look at the letters between the vowels.
- 3 Choose the pattern and draw the split.
- 4 Label each syllable's type.
- 5 Read each syllable, then the whole word.
- 6 Ask: is it a real word? If not, flex the vowel sound and try again.

Words to practice

napkin	robot	cabin
tiger	lion	monster
puzzle	rainbow	garden
pumpkin	music	candle
reptile	sandwich	hundred

Why flexing matters

Patterns are reliable, not perfect. In unstressed syllables vowels often reduce to the schwa (the second syllable of *lemon*). Teaching students to try the other vowel sound keeps them reading instead of stuck.