

Spelling Success through Syllabication

**Reproducible Lessons Using Syllabication
as Direct Preparation
for Successful Spelling Programs**

by

Betsy A. Lockhart

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Introduction

or

How to Teach an Engineer to Spell

Do you subscribe to the theory that there are people who just can't spell? Have you ever told yourself that if there was one best way to teach spelling, everyone would be using it? If so, then you will likely be as excited about syllabication as I was when I first learned it!

I was as far from a natural speller as they come. My mother, an English Literature major, and my dad, a professional writer, were appalled by my semi-phonetic approach to spelling. They could not fathom how an accomplished reader and writer could construct such creative approaches to spelling! When I was a senior in high school, Mom asked me if I thought I would ever learn to spell. I promptly left for engineering school, where professors cared less about whether or not you could spell than they did whether or not you could find the second derivative of a partial differential equation. Thankfully, as I began my career as a geophysical engineer, word processing with spell check came into common use! ☺ I began to realize how embarrassingly poor my spelling really was, and made a conscious effort to learn proper spelling while the spell checker masked my disability. In time, I became a passable speller.

After my daughter was born, I began my second career as Montessori upper elementary teacher. Horrifyingly, I was then responsible not only for my own spelling, but that of the children in my class as well! I tried a different spelling approach each year. With each method, some children were successful while others struggled. No method helped children with applied spelling. Finally, I realized why. We expected children to globalize spelling patterns and rules from lists of words to be memorized. What a ridiculous way to teach! This is no different from expecting children to perform long division by memorizing a list of division facts! Now the conundrum - - finding the better spelling mousetrap!

About this time our school director brought in a speaker to talk about better methods of teaching reading. She drew from her experience as a learning specialist, including extensive training in Linda-Mood Bell, a multi-faceted approach to reading for children with very poor phonemic awareness. As we began to learn to syllabicate words according to the Linda-Mood Bell 6-syllable schemata, I realized, for the first time, that there was logic to spelling! As I developed a spelling program utilizing a syllable-based approach, I began to realize the power of this method of looking at words. I added a seventh syllable type, developed lessons that exercise these new skills, and test-drove the lessons in my own 4th and 5th grade classroom.

I gauged the success of the program when I introduced it by the performance of my returning 5th year students, many of whom had been unsuccessful the previous year with traditional spelling programs. Good and poor spellers alike found syllabication challenging! Natural spellers did not significantly alter their approach to or success with spelling. However, by teaching syllabication as a pre-spelling unit, and continuing it when spelling lessons began, all of the children in my class were successful with spelling tests. More importantly, many children's applied spelling improved at a rate not commensurate with their previous year's progress. Now I teach syllabication to all 4th year students as soon as school begins in the fall. My 5th year students can opt-out of syllabication if they can successfully complete the final quiz without assistance. Most repeat the lessons from the previous year, with a more sophisticated level of comprehension and greater confidence. There are no hard data or lateral studies to support my contention that this tool works. I can only offer my subjective opinion that papers written by my students now are more often properly, or at least logically, spelled than before I began teaching syllabication.

In the following years, I refined the tool. I have learned that children who cannot syllabicate words often have hidden disabilities with phonemic awareness that can significantly hinder their reading. I refer all of these children to our reading specialist for testing. Generally speaking, she finds one or more specific issues that should be remediated.

That is my story. I still use spell-check (sometimes). I confidently turn in hand-written work to the school office without feeling the need to have it proofread. I chuckle to myself when colleagues ask me how to spell a word. My mother is amazed. The way I figure it, if this method can teach an aging engineer to spell, anyone can learn! Try it for yourself! Then spread the word. There is a better way to teach spelling!

Betsy A. Lockhart

Please share your experiences with me at lockhartlearning@gmail.com .

Letters & Sounds

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR? Chapter 3

English is a funny language.

REALLY!

How else can you explain a language where today you can read a book but yesterday you would have read it? Consider that some people live with live alligators near their houses! Who would think up a system where it takes six letters to spell a word with only 3 sounds (weight).

In English there are some letters that you can trust. They always make the same sound whenever you see them. Other letters are sneaky!

Hey! Is that an insult?



I prefer to think of it as being creative and flexible!



However you think about it, there are some letters that you can count on, and others with which you need to be more careful. Your teacher will use the appendix of this book to guide you through the chart that follows this page. This chart helps us be aware of the many possibilities with letters!

SYLLABLES



Hey, what are syllables, anyway?

Syllables are chunks of words. They are almost like the rhythm of the word. The number of syllables, or beats, a word has can be found by tapping the word out. There are some guidelines about how to break words into syllables. Sometimes, as we will see later, there is more than one correct way to syllabicate a word.

Here are some general rules to help you break words into syllables.

- 1. Every syllable must have a vowel. This rule is a MUST!!**
Some have more than one.
- 2. Break up the consonants EXCEPT when the two consonants make a single sound or blend.**
 - Always break up double consonants (hap·pen)
 - Generally divide unlike consonants that are next to one another (cat·nip)
 - Never split digraphs/blends (rock·et, cach·er, Wash·ing·ton, pro·gram
re·spond, wing·span, sling·shot, con·struct, re·strict)
 - Always divide compound words between the two words (hand·bag, chest·nut)
- 3. The trickiest places to break up words are when one consonant is shared by 2 vowels.**
 - when the vowel in the first syllable is short, the consonant goes with the first syllable (rel·ish or ton·ic)
 - when the vowel in the first syllable is long, the consonant goes with the second syllable (loo·cate or proo·test)

OPEN & CLOSED SYLLABLES Chapter 4



You mean there are different kinds of syllables?

Absolutely! Knowing the types of syllables can be very helpful when trying to read unfamiliar words AND when trying to figure out how to spell words!

Remember that a vowel is a sound that is a sound made by free flowing air, shaped by the tongue? If there is nothing to stop the sound, a vowel can go on as long as you have air to push out of your lungs!



I remember! "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa..."

Consonants are sounds that stop vowels. If there is no consonant to stop the vowel, it can go a long, long way. So, in this case, the vowel takes the long form - it says its name! This is an **open syllable**. The word silo has two open syllables: si • lo.

If there is a consonant to stop (or close in) the vowel, the vowel takes its short form. The word catnip has 2 closed syllables: cat•nip. The word began has an open and a closed syllable: be• gan. An **open syllable** also has only one vowel, but it is the last letter in the syllable. A **closed syllable** can have only one vowel, and follows the vowel with one or more consonants

Stuff your parents might want to know The following are closed syllables, but carry the long vowel pronunciation: -ild -old -olt -ost -ind

Chapter Four - Open and Closed Syllables - Monday

Please syllabicate each of the following words just as you did last week. Mark the break between syllables with a dot. Then place a C over those syllables that are closed, and an O over the syllables that are open.

1. moment

2. also

3. momento

4. program

5. predict

6. himself

7. proton

8. detest

9. happen

10. demand

Quiz Answers-Chapter Four-Open & Closed Syllables

Please syllabicate each of the following words. Mark the break between syllables with a dot. Be sure that your mark goes between two letters. Then place a **C** over those syllables that are **closed**, and an **O** over the syllables that are **open**.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <i>c - c - c</i>
1. dish•wash•er | <i>c - o</i>
2. lim•bo | <i>c - c</i>
3. sub•ject |
| <i>c - o</i>
4. al•so | <i>c - c</i>
5. un•tied | <i>o - o - c</i>
6. u•ni•ted |
| <i>o - c - o</i>
7. mo•men•to | <i>o - c</i>
8. re•call | <i>c - c</i>
9. mag•ic |
| <i>o - c</i>
10. pro•gram | <i>o - c - c</i>
11. re•plen•ish | <i>o - c</i>
12. fre•quent |
| <i>o - c</i>
13. pre•dict | <i>o - c</i>
14. tree•top | <i>o - o</i>
15. si•lo |
| <i>c - c</i>
4. him•self | <i>o - c - c</i>
17. de•pen•dent | <i>o - c</i>
18. re•run |
| <i>o - c</i>
19. pro•ton | <i>o - c</i>
20. de•mand | <i>o - c</i>
21. re•flex |
| <i>c - c</i>
22. Den•ver | <i>o - c - c</i>
23. re•fresh•ments | <i>c - o</i>
24. ban•jo |
| | <i>c - o - c</i>
25. dip•lo•mat | |

c - o - c - o - c
BONUS: sem•i•cir•cu•lar