

1

Syllables



Introducing syllables

The basic unit of English rhythm is the syllable. Listen. Pay attention to the number of syllables.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ease	easy	easily
care	careful	carefully
paint	painted	repainted
call	recall	recalling



Tapping the syllables

Listen and repeat the words while tapping your hand or foot for each syllable.

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one	seven	eleven	What is that thing?
noun	sentence	syllable	I have to go.
can	cannot	continue	It's important.
can't	eighteen	direction	He wants a book.



Which word is different?

Listen. You will hear three words. Mark the column for the word that is different.

	X	Y	Z	
1.✓.....	(fish, fish, fishy)
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	



Which word do you hear? □ □ □

Listen. Circle the word you hear.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1. mess | <u>messy</u> |
| 2. blow | below |
| 3. prayed | parade |
| 4. loud | aloud |
| 5. sport | support |
| 6. round | around |
| 7. claps | collapse |
| 8. closed | closet |
| 9. state | estate |
| 10. squeeze | excuse |



Pair work: One or two syllables? □ □ □

Student A: Say one word from each pair of words.

Student B: Hold up one finger if the word has one syllable or two fingers if the word has two syllables.

Take turns saying the words. Do not always say the first word in each pair.

Examples

Student A: Sunny.

Student B: (Hold up two fingers.)



Student A: Red.

Student B: (Hold up one finger.)



- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1. sun | sunny |
| 2. red | ready |
| 3. flow | fellow |
| 4. rose | roses |
| 5. state | estate |
| 6. paint | painted |
| 7. boss | bosses |
| 8. sport | support |
| 9. blow | below |
| 10. sleep | asleep |



Extra syllable in past tense verbs

Usually, when **-ed** is added to a verb to make it past tense, the number of syllables in the verb *does not* change. However, with some verbs, adding **-ed** *does* add an extra syllable.

- 1 Listen to how **-ed** changes the following verbs.

Present tense → Past tense

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
rent	rented
plant	planted

- 2 Listen. Hold up one finger if you hear one syllable and two fingers if you hear two syllables.

fainted	landed	worked	caused	planned
laughed	added	folded	treated	counted
started	watched	closed	asked	cooked

Do you know the rule for when **-ed** is pronounced as an extra syllable? If not, try the following puzzle.

- 3 *Puzzle:* The verbs in lists **A** and **B** below have an extra syllable in the past tense. How are they different from the verbs in lists **C** and **D**?

A	B	C	D
plant	land	work	wash
start	fold	live	walk
treat	add	save	cause
wait	raid	laugh	plan
heat	load	call	close
attract	record	arrange	contain

Clue: Look at how the verbs in list **A** and list **B** are spelled. What do all the verbs in list **A** have in common? What do all the verbs in list **B** have in common?

- 4 Can you figure out the rule for saying an extra syllable in the past tense? Write down what you think it is. Check your answer on page 9.

Rule:



Counting syllables in past tense verbs □ □ □

- 1 Listen. You will hear the present tense and the past tense of the following verbs. Write the past tense of each verb.

Present tense	Syllables	Past tense	Syllables
1. paint	1	<i>..... painted</i>	<i>..... 2</i>
2. clean	1	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
3. need	1	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
4. decide	2	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
5. dislike	2	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
6. prepare	2	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
7. represent	3	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>
8. entertain	3	<i>.....</i>	<i>.....</i>

- 2 Listen again and write the number of syllables in each past tense verb.

H Pair work: Past or present?

Student A: Say sentence **a** or sentence **b**.

Student B: Say "Past" or "Present."

Take turns saying the sentences. Do not always say sentence **a** first.

Example

Student A: We wanted to buy a used car.

Student B: Past.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. a. We want to buy a used car. | 5. a. We start by checking the Internet. |
| b. We wanted to buy a used car. | b. We started by checking the Internet. |
| 2. a. The doctors treat sick people. | 6. a. We rent a lake house every summer. |
| b. The doctors treated sick people. | b. We rented a lake house every summer. |
| 3. a. I intend to go shopping. | 7. a. The teachers want a pay raise. |
| b. I intended to go shopping. | b. The teachers wanted a pay raise. |
| 4. a. People crowd into trains. | 8. a. They start at 8 o'clock. |
| b. People crowded into trains. | b. They started at 8 o'clock. |



Silent letters

Some English words have letters that are silent. Silent letters can affect the number of syllables in a word. It is important that you pronounce words in English with the correct number of syllables.

1 Listen. Cross out the silent letters in these words.



walked

planned

closed

talked



business

Wednesday

every

family



vegetable*

interesting*

differently



laboratory*

elementary*

2 Practice saying the words out loud until you can say them easily.



Music of English

1 Listen. Notice the difference in the number of syllables in the two words.

How do you spell "ease"?

E - A - S - E.

How do you spell "easy"?

E - A - S - Y.

2 Listen again and repeat each sentence until you can say it easily. Learn it like a little song.

* These are common pronunciations in North America, but some native speakers of English may say these words differently.

K Pair work: Asking about spelling

Student A: Ask question **a** or question **b**.

Student B: Answer the question.

Student A: If the answer is wrong, repeat the question.

Take turns asking and answering. Do not always ask question **a** first.

Example

Student A: How do you spell "easy"?

Student B: E - A - S - E.

Student A: No. How do you spell "easy"?

Student B: E - A - S - Y.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. a. How do you spell "ease"? | E - A - S - E. |
| b. How do you spell "easy"? | E - A - S - Y. |
| 2. a. How do you spell "sport"? | S - P - O - R - T. |
| b. How do you spell "support"? | S - U - P - P - O - R - T. |
| 3. a. How do you spell "traffic"? | T - R - A - F - F - I - C. |
| b. How do you spell "terrific"? | T - E - R - R - I - F - I - C. |
| 4. a. How do you spell "squeeze"? | S - Q - U - E - E - Z - E. |
| b. How do you spell "excuse"? | E - X - C - U - S - E. |
| 5. a. How do you spell "boss"? | B - O - S - S. |
| b. How do you spell "bosses"? | B - O - S - S - E - S. |
| 6. a. How do you spell "close"? | C - L - O - S - E. |
| b. How do you spell "closed"? | C - L - O - S - E - D. |



L Music of English

English speakers let us know the most important information by using a rise in melody. This rise is the peak of information.

- 1 Listen. Notice the syllables where you hear the rise in melody.

What does "easy" mean?

"Easy" means "not hard."

- 2 Listen again and repeat each sentence until you can say it easily. Learn it like a little song.

M Pair work: Asking about meaning

Student A: Ask question **a** or question **b**.

Student B: Say the matching answer.

Student A: If the answer is wrong, repeat the question.

Take turns asking and answering. Do not always ask question **a** first.

Example

Student A: What does "easy" mean?

Student B: "Easy" means "comfort."

Student A: No. What does "easy" mean?

Student B: "Easy" means "not hard."

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. a. What does "ease" mean? | "Ease" means "comfort." |
| b. What does "easy" mean? | "Easy" means "not hard." |
| 2. a. What does "need" mean? | "Need" means "must have." |
| b. What does "needed" mean? | "Needed" is the past tense of "need." |
| 3. a. What does "closed" mean? | The opposite of "open." |
| b. What does "closet" mean? | A place to put things. |
| 4. a. What does "first" mean? | At the beginning. |
| b. What does "forest" mean? | A lot of trees. |
| 5. a. What does "traffic" mean? | It means "lots of cars." |
| b. What does "terrific" mean? | It means "great." |
| 6. a. What does "cracked" mean? | Something like "broken." |
| b. What does "correct" mean? | "Right." |



Check yourself: Counting syllables

- 1 Listen. Write the number of syllables above the underlined words.

This is the first city they visited when they traveled here on business.

They were so pleased that they decided to stay seven extra days.

- 2 If possible, record yourself saying these sentences. Listen to your recording. Did you get the correct number of syllables?

O Syllable number game □ □ □

Divide into teams. In five minutes, write the names of any foods you can think of that have one, two, three, or four syllables.

□	□□	□□□	□□□□
<i>rice</i>	<i>ice cream</i>	<i>banana</i>	<i>asparagus</i>
.....
.....
.....

In five minutes, write the names of any countries and cities you can think of that have one, two, three, or four syllables.

□	□□	□□□	□□□□
<i>France</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Singapore</i>	<i>Argentina</i>
.....
.....
.....

P Dictation: How many syllables? □ □ □

Listen and write the sentences you hear. Then count the number of syllables in each sentence. You will hear each sentence two times.

	Number of syllables
1. <i>He works in an interesting business.</i>	9
2.
3.
4.
5.

Answer to Task F (page 4)

4 Rule: If the last sound of a regular verb is /t/ or /d/, the past tense has an extra syllable.