

## Divide Words into Syllables

Adapted from Wikihow

**1 Divide words based on the number of vowels.** The number of syllables in a word coincide with the number of vowel sounds you hear when speaking the word. Phonetically, each vowel sound is a syllable. Grammatically, and to ensure correctness since people pronounce words differently, the determination of syllables in a word is a little more complex.

**2 Add the number of vowels the word has.** These include 'a,' 'e,' 'i,' 'o,' 'u' and 'y' when it is found in the middle or at the end of a word.

1. Subtract 1 for each silent vowel in the word. Found at the end of some words like 'came' and 'gone,' 'E' is the most common silent vowel.
2. Consider words ending in 'le' as a vowel. When the ending 'le' is pronounced 'el,' count it as a vowel sound, and divide the word before the consonant right before the 'le' Little, for example would be divided lit/tle; fumble as fum/ble; able as a/ble.
3. Count diphthongs as 1 syllable instead of 2. A diphthong is made up of 2 vowels beside each other in a word that result in a single gliding sound. A diphthong is a digraph: 2 letters that are inseparable and make 1 sound. Words like 'haul,' 'moon,' and 'coil' are diphthongs. Note that there are 2 vowels present but together they only count as 1 syllable. There are instances where 2 vowels beside each other in a word make their own unique sound and indicate 2 syllables. Examples of this are: li/on, gi/ant and cha/os.
4. Total the number of syllables based on vowel sounds as determined by the criteria above.

**3 Draw lines between syllables for easy recognition.** When following steps for determining syllables, write the word on a piece of paper and draw lines between the letters where syllables start and end. This exercise will help you recognize how to apply the rules for dividing words into syllables.

**4 Split words between consonants.** Divide a word where there are 2 internal consonants neighboring each other. This pair should be surrounded by vowels. Here is how you would syllabicate the following words: hap/py, din/ner, bas/ket, un/der. The exception to this are consonant digraphs; for example, ch, th, wh, sh, ph. These pairings cannot be separated.

**5 Find syllables by splitting a word before a single consonant.** Examples are: au/tumn, o/pen, de/tail.

**6 Keep letter pairings together.** Some letters stick together like 'sl,' 'pl,' 'st' and 'tch.' So, kicking would be kick/ing, not kic/king. At times, you will notice these pairings when there are 3 consonants together. In this instance, 1 consonant will stick with 1 syllable while the consonant pairing goes with the other syllable. Some examples are: mon/ster and ex/plain.

**7 Mark prefixes, suffixes and other word additives as syllables.** These word parts frame other words and should be kept intact themselves.

1. Prefixes like 'un,' 'de,' 'ex,' 'en,' 'pre' and 're' are word parts that begin words and should be sectioned off from the rest of the word during syllabication. There are prefixes like 'anti' that are 2 syllables.
2. Suffixes are word parts that end words. Some common suffixes include 'ant,' 'en,' 'er,' 'less' and 'ful.' You should syllabicate farmer as farm/er and hopeless as hope/less. Special consideration is taken for the suffix 'ing.' When syllabifying 'ing' words that have a short vowel sound, mark the syllable before the consonant in front of the 'ing.' Hopping should be hop/ping, for instance.
3. Divide compound words between the words to separate syllables. Words in and of themselves are pronounced and syllabicated separately. Houseboat, for instance, is separated as house/boat.

### **Tips**

2. Place the back of your hand under your chin for an easy way to determine syllables. Speak. Every time your jaw moves, it is a new syllable.
3. Read the word out loud. This will help you syllabicate words on paper as well as say words correctly that you are unfamiliar with when reading. When in doubt on where to split a word into syllables, follow the common practice that an open-ended vowel, or a vowel at the end of a portion of sound, will say its long sound. A vowel that is closed off with a consonant will say its short sound.
4. Government for example is 3 syllables.