



Syllable Stories for Syllable Sense

Once upon a time there was a wise old man who wanted to make it easier to read words in English. He thought about how every word is made of syllables, and if you don't know much about them, you're stuck. On the other hand, if the syllables are too confusing, you might not want to think about them at all, so the old man decided he would tell stories to make syllable more interesting.

First he said, "Let's imagine that all the vowels that are too shy to say their real names like to hide in **Closed Syllables**. That's why you always see a consonant at the end of those syllables. They shyly whisper their short sounds, hiding behind their consonant doors:



Ed bed at cat tap get set it rib rim ox box fog up cup fun

There are more closed syllables in English than any other syllable, so if you can sound them out with their short shy sounds, you're in really good shape.

The vowels that come at the ends of syllables aren't shy one bit! They don't need a door at the end to hide behind, and they say their names loud and clear. Try reading these **Open Syllables**, and make sure you let all the vowels say their long sounds.

ma me mi mo mu la le li lo lu da be ri po ru

When you feel good about reading open syllables with long vowel and closed syllables you're ready to play a sorting game, so you can tell at a glance which vowels to make long and which ones to make short.

The wise man was pleased with his first two syllable stories, but then he said to himself, "What will I do with the words that have a long vowel sound before a consonant?" This bothered him for a long time until one night he had a dream about an **e**. The **e** said to him, "I'm a magic **e**, but don't be afraid. I won't hurt you. I just want you to know I can help to make vowels sound long and say their own names when a consonant comes after them. I just put myself after the consonant door and poke a hole, so the long sound can say its name right through the consonant door."

"Thank you, Magic **e**. I'll tell my friends about you right away." And from that day to this, children have been able to read Magic-**e** syllables knowing the vowels can say their long sounds even though they are followed by consonant doors! Let's practice reading a few magic-**e** syllables!

Yule made fake take lake these ride like rode code lone tune mule

Can you think of some more?

The wise man liked this idea very much, but he knew that the magic e would need some help. Perhaps there could be another way to let a vowel say its long sound before a consonant. This time he thought of an idea himself. Whenever a vowel needs to be long in front of a consonant door, let's give it an extra vowel to help push the door away. That extra vowel will give extra room so the first vowel can say its long sound. The wise man was very pleased with himself to have thought of such a good idea, and you can see that it is used in lots and lots of English words. Some vowel teams have different sounds, but enough of them say the long sound of the first letter that if you don't know a word, it is always worth trying it that way first. Try reading these **vowel team** syllables.

rain train lean team bead pie boat road coat blue true

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Can you think of some more?

One night the wise man had another dream. This time it was an **r** that spoke to him. The **r** didn't smile nicely the way the magic **e** had. In fact **r** said he liked to be a monster. "A monster," cried the wise man. "How can a letter be a monster?"

"Well, I'm not that bad a monster. I don't hurt any letters. I just make them say what I want them to say."

"I know there are people who always want their own way," responded the wise man dreamily, "but I didn't know letters could do that."

"Just look at a few words and you'll see. If I come after an **a**, you won't hear any of **a**'s long or short sounds. You just hear us both saying /ar/. All of a sudden, the wise man realized this wasn't a bad dream at all; it was just another helping dream that would make reading easier for his friends in the real world. So the minute he woke up, he jumped out of bed and raced to his dictionary to find all the syllables he could that ended with **r**. Sure enough, whenever that **r** came after a vowel, it

twisted the vowel up to sound the way the **r** monster wanted it to sound. You can test this yourself on **r-controlled** words you already know.

car start far her first bird or for burn fur hurt turn learn

Can you think of some more?

When you get used to how the **r** monster controls vowels in the words you know, you will see that he can't confuse you any more in new words. Just remember his tricks, and you'll be all set.

The wise man slept very well for weeks after his dreams with **magic e** and the **r monster**. His days were filled telling all the children he could find about them and how knowing their magic makes reading easier and easier.

One day, however, he discovered there was a sixth syllable type he had never thought of. He had been telling the stories of the other five syllables when a little girl raised her hand. She said, "Thank you for these helpful reading tricks. They all make sense, but I'm still confused about words that end with **tle** and **gle** and **dle** and **ble** and **zle**. When I make them sound like **Open Syllables** with a long **e**, they sounds silly, but they have too many doors for **magic e** to poke through.

The wise man closed his eyes and thought about all the words the little girl was talking about; little, table puzzle, and he knew she was right. Nothing he had taught the children would help explain why table is not ta-blee and puzzle is not puz-zlee! At last he said to the little girl, "You have noticed something very special in English. In fact, it is so special that I had forgotten all about it. Let me come back to morrow and tell you a consonant-le story! He knew he needed time to make up a good one, and going to sleep was his best chance to think of something!

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Sure enough, in the middle of the night, he heard a tap at the door, and up he sat with a start. Who could be at the door in the middle of the night? Then he remembered he must be dreaming, so he dropped back on the pillow. The next thing he noticed was a line of dancers on a stage who were kicking their legs all together and singing, "Every syllable needs a vowel, every syllable needs a vowel!"

The wise old man had been having quite a few strange dreams recently, so he didn't think too much about this one, but even so, it was very odd. Dancers usually sing songs about love and happiness, not about how to spell! He rolled over and tried to put the whole picture out of his mind, but in the morning, there it was again, dancers kicking their legs and singing, "Every syllable needs a vowel." This time the silly dream woke him up out of a sound sleep, so he remembered every word. Then he began to think about those **ble**, **dle** and **zle** words. That was it. All you could hear was a consonant and an l, but if they didn't end with a silent **e**, all those syllables would not have a vowel. They would be breaking the rule. Since we are used to **e** being silent, it is the perfect letter to help those syllables follow the rule. We just have to get used to one more silent **e** job. Now the wise man could go back and tell the story to the little girl who was probably still wondering, and all the way he could kick his legs just like the dancers and sing, "Every syllable needs a vowel, every syllable needs a vowel."

Now that you know the story of the wise man and the syllables, reading will be easier for you too. Don't feel badly if you have to review the story now and then. Six syllable types is a lot to remember, but once you know them, you will give happiness to that wise old man whose only dream was to make English reading easier. Just for him, let's review all the syllables:

When you get to the end of the syllable Sense Review, you'll find a game to play with words that make use of all the syllable types. The first page will be the game board, the second page has to be cut out to give you your game cards and the third page gives you some directions. Enjoy!

Syllable Sense



- **Closed syllables** have shy-sounding single short vowels followed by a “consonant door”, and they don’t dare say their own names. Think of **cat**, **mitt**, **lot**, and **fun**.
- **Open syllables** end with a vowel. Those single vowels can sing out their names. Think of **me**, **no**, and **be**.
- **Vowel consonant-e syllables** end with a magic silent **e** that pokes an invisible hole in the consonant door so that the vowel before it can say its name. Think of **make** and **like** and **poke**.
- **Vowel Team syllables** have more than one vowel saying one sound. Those teams of vowels can say long vowel sounds, but they can also say other sounds no vowel can say by itself. Think of **rain** **coat** **bead** **now** **out** and **blew**.
- **R-controlled Syllables** have an **r** after a vowel, and that monster **r** makes the vowel sound the way he likes. Think of **car** **horse** **her** and **hurt**.
- **Consonant-le syllables** end with a silent **e**. All you can hear is a consonant-l blend, but Every syllable needs a vowel, so good old silent **e** helps out once again. Think of **puzzle**, **table**, and **little**.

Directions for Playing Syllable Sense Game

Preparation:





































First find a die and about 15 markers for each player. Markers can be anything from colored plastic disks to pennies and dimes or macaroni and raisins. Print out the two charts below, and then cut out the word cards on the second chart, or print out your own words in bigger print. You'll see that the words in the last column have their consonant-le syllable underlined. That's how you can tell to use them for their second syllable.






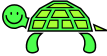
For many students, longer words will hold more interest. Choosing the words to include can be half the fun. Just make sure you make an equal number of words for each syllable type and that in multi-syllable words you have underlined the syllable you mean for that word.

Spread the word cards out upside down next to the Syllable chart.

Directions:

- In each turn, players turn one word right side up and decide which syllable row should have that word.
- Next, players roll a die, and find the column with that number on the chart.
- Finally, they place a marker on the square that is both under the die number and in the row of the right syllable type. If that square already has a marker, they roll the die again.
- The winner is the first one to get a row of three, diagonally, vertically, or horizontally or the one with the longest line when time is up. Players can agree at the start of the game if they would like to include bending lines of connected squares.

<u>Syllable Types</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Open	 me	 me	 me	 me	 me	 me	Vowel last says its name with a blast (me)
Closed							Consonant door closes vowel in short (cat)
Vowel Team							More than one vowel says one sound (boat)
R-controlled							r makes the vowel say what r likes (car)
Magic e							Magic e makes the vowel long (time)
C-le							Syllable needs a vowel (turtle)

Open	Closed	Vowel Team	Magic e	R-controlled	C-le
					
me	cat	blue	time	horse	little
he	pot	team	dime	cart	turtle
hi	let	boat	lime	farm	cuddle
mu	kit	rain	tame	her	middle
fro	set	tree	game	or	fiddle
so	put	play	Pete	port	table
be	gull	snow	mule	fur	rattle
ta	fill	tie	note	bird	gurgle

