Reading/Decoding Skills: Syllables Part 3

Knowing about syllable patterns will add to the tools you already have as you begin to read new words in your independent reading. Rather than trying to memorize many generally unhelpful syllable rules, you may gain much benefit from using several syllabication tips. Because English is irregular, you will benefit by having the attitude of a scientist or an explorer: "Let's try this, and let's try that…."

If you are decoding a word that is unknown to you, first look at all the letters in the word. Then look for word parts or patterns, using the steps below.

1. **Look for compound words.** Divide compound words between the two words. Then look for common words or syllable patterns. Identify the two words that make up the following compound words:

baseball ay o	bathtub th	eyesight ie ie	footstep oo
outside ow ie	playground ay ow	snowfall ow oa o	armchair ch ay

For words that are not compounds and have more than one syllable, use the following tips.

2. **Look for prefixes and suffixes.** As you look at all the letters in the word, see if you recognize word parts (prefixes like *re-, in-* or *un-*; suffixes like *–er, -ing- , -ment* or *-tion*; and see if you recognize base or root words. For example,

restate = re + state entertainment = entertain + ment.
ea ay ay

decoration = decorate + tion (Notice that the base word changes)
k u ay sh u

3. **Look to see where to divide words into syllables:**
   a. Look after the first vowel. If the first vowel is followed by two consonants, try dividing the word between the consonants. Do not divide a digraph like *ch, sh th* or *ph*. Divide the following words into two syllables. You may want to copy them onto your own paper. You will see the answers on the second page after this. Look for "Answers to 3. a."

kitten bubble mistake tractor nephew

b. If the first vowel is followed by **one** consonant, try dividing before the consonant, and try the vowel's long sound. This should work just over half the time. For practice, divide these words into two syllables. You may want to copy them onto your own paper. You will see the answers on the next page.

pilot favor lady music sofa future

c. After doing step b, if you don't recognize the word, then try dividing *after* the consonant, and try the short sound for the first vowel. Divide these words into two syllables. You may want to copy them onto your own paper. You will see the answers on the next page.

planet seven magic camel lizard limit

Now let's practice these steps with a sample word.

Suppose you are reading and you see this word: acquainted

Follow these steps, first looking at all the letters in the word:

1. Is it a compound? No. Go on to your next step.
2. You see the suffix –*ed*. Either on paper or in your mind, divide the word before the suffix: acquaint♦ed
3. Notice the vowels in the word. You might even underline them. What follows the first vowel? Since it is two consonants, try dividing between them. (Do not divide a digraph like *ch, sh, ph* or *th*.) What does that give you?
   ac♦quaint♦ed
4. Using syllable patterns, you know the first syllable is a closed syllable (one vowel, ending in a consonant) so it probably has a short sound. The *c* looks like it would make a *k* sound because it is not followed by *i, e* or *y*. So the first syllable would sound like ac (k)
5. Now on to the second syllable. The *qu* generally sounds like *kw* or sometimes *k*. the vowel digraph *ai* usually sounds like *ay*. (In an unaccented syllable, it usually has the *schwa* sound, *ə*, which you recall can sound like *u*, *a, e* or *i.*) So you try this: ac♦quaint♦ed (k kw ay)

Even if you didn't recognize the word on your first try, you may now. You'll see that you don't need the precise vowel sounds to recognize many words. Later in this section you'll read

about accents in words. When you know the next step, you will stress the second syllable, and you will know that in the word *acquainted* the first vowel sound is probably a schwa, or *u*, so you can try the word as this: ac♦**quaint**♦ed. Do you recognize this word now?
u k kw ay

If you are reading a book, you may not recognize a word or know its meaning after you have done all these steps and have pronounced the word. Then you can read again the text the word is in to see if the text gives you clues. In the case of our example, you would probably figure out that *acquainted* means "familiar with."

Next perhaps your parent or teacher can give you a few words to practice with on your own. These should be words that are unknown to you.

Answers to 3. a:

kit♦ten bub♦ble mis♦take trac♦tor neph♦ew

Answers to 3. b:

pi♦lot fa♦vor la♦dy mu♦sic so♦fa fu♦ture

Answers to 3. c:

plan♦et sev♦en mag♦ic cam♦el liz♦ard lim♦it

Tip for the next story: The Suffix *-ic*

This suffix, another of the most common suffixes, sounds like *–ik*. It means having the quality of. Here are some examples of words ending in *ic*:

public mathematic electric allergic
k u j

athletic scientific physics
ie f i z

Glossary:

distracted: not able to pay attention dunce: stupid person
k u shu s oo u

phonograph: record player ac•cum•u•la•ted: gathered
f oa u f k u uk kyoo yu ay

labo•ra•to•ry: a place for science ex•per•i•ments
u oa ea ks

phys•ics: science dealing with the na•ture of matter and energy
f i z k ay ch

Note to teacher: The developer of the light bulb and the phonograph, Thomas Alva Edison is famous as an inventor. In the following stories from his youth, though, you'll see some other surprising aspects of his life. If you or your child is interested, you may enjoy reading on your own to learn more about this incredible man.

Young Alva, the Newsboy (Part 1)

u oo z

(the suffix –*ic*)

ks k

After his first three months in school, his teacher thought

Alva was confused and distracted. His father began to
u k u yooz k i

wonder if he was stupid, and he thought himself a dunce.
u oo s

But he became one of the most important thinkers and
z

inventors of the cen♦tu♦ry.
u z s ch ea

Thomas Alva Edison, best known as the man who
i u u

invented the *electric* light bulb, was born in 1847 in Milan,
k k o

O♦hi♦o. Edison's most famous inventions are the first
oa ie oa u z ay shu z

practical long-lasting light bulb and the phonograph. He also
k ku f oa oa f

helped design and develop other inventions like motion
t i z ie shu z oa shu

picture cameras, the stock ticker and the typewriter.
k uz ie

At seven, Thomas moved with his family to Port Huron,
i oa you

Michigan. They lived in a large house in the middle of an
sh i ul

old government fort reservation of ten a♦cres. Their home
oa z ay shu ay kurz

gave a view of the wide St. Clair River just after it leaves
saynt k ay z

Lake Huron.
ay you

It was at the Port Huron *public* school that Edison
oa you k u

received all the regular classroom instruction he ever
i sea yu u k shu

enjoyed—just three months. His teacher had found him

confused. He had almost begun to think of himself as a
ku yooz

dunce.
s

Mrs. Edison was happy to take on the instruction of her
is iz u kshu

son. She was hopeful for the fu♦ture of the very eager and
u you ch

thoughtful boy. And with her he found study easy and
ea

pleasant. Before age twelve he had read, with his mother's
z u ay j z

help, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and
u z i k ie oa i ie

Hume's *History of England*. Also, Sears' *History of the*
yoo z ea i e z ea

World, Burton's challenging text on medicine, and the
oa u z j ks s

Dic♦tion♦ar♦y of Sciences. He had even tried to struggle
k shu ay ea z ul

through Newton's *Prin♦cip♦i♦a* (but the *mathematics* were far
u z s ea u k

beyond both teacher and student).
i oo

In the Edisons' cellar, young Alva soon ac♦cum♦u♦la♦ted a
u z s u u uk kyoo yu ay

chemical outfit. It was his first labo♦ra♦to♦ry. The boy began
k ku ow u oa ea

ex♦per♦i♦ment♦ing when he was about ten years of age. He
ks z ay j

got a basic book on the subject of *physics*, and tried about
ay k k f i z k

every experiment in it. (Con't)
ks

Young Alva, the Newsboy (Part 1)
(the suffix –*ic*)

After his first three months in school, his teacher thought he was confused and distracted. His father began to wonder if he was stupid, and he thought himself a dunce. But he became one of the most important thinkers and inventors of the century.

Thomas Alva Edison, best known as the man who invented the *electric* light bulb, was born in 1847 in Milan, Ohio. Edison's most famous inventions are the first practical long-lasting light bulb and the phonograph. He also helped design and develop other inventions like motion picture cameras, the stock ticker and the typewriter.

At seven, Thomas moved with his family to Port Huron, Michigan. They lived in a large house in the middle of an old government fort reservation of ten acres. Their home gave a view of the wide St. Clair River just after it leaves Lake Huron.

It was at the Port Huron *public* school that Edison received all the regular classroom instruction he ever enjoyed--just three months. His teacher had found him confused. He had almost begun to think of himself as a dunce.

Mrs. Edison was happy to take on the instruction of her son. She was hopeful for the future of the very eager and thoughtful boy. And with her he found study easy and pleasant. Before age twelve he had read, with his mother's help, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Hume's *History of England*. Also, Sears' *History of the World*, Burton's challenging text on medicine, and the *Dictionary of Sciences*. He had even tried to struggle through Newton's *Principia*. (But the *mathematics* were far

beyond both teacher and student.)

In the Edisons' cellar, young Alva soon accumulated a chemical outfit. It was his first laboratory. The boy began experimenting when he was about ten years of age. He got a basic book on the subject of *physics*, and tried about every experiment in it. (Con't)

The following comprehension questions are to be read to the student and discussed.

1. Why did Alva's mom not want him to have a lab in their cellar?
2. What is a *newsboy*?
3. Why might Thomas Edison's teacher have thought he was confused and distracted?
4. Give at least two examples that show Thomas Alva Edison was very bright. Explain your thinking.