

## 4 Syllables

### WHAT ARE SYLLABLES?

A syllable is a small piece of a word. It has a vowel sound in the middle. A syllable can be one vowel, or two vowels that make one sound.

example:       desk                   niece                    pilot                     Vancouver

In spoken English, a syllable is one puff of air.

#### Why are syllables important to learn?

Often people learning English are difficult to understand because they drop or add syllables when speaking. Here are some common student syllable errors:

#### TOO MANY SYLLABLES

I asked for a salad   .

(correct: I asked for a salad.)

I speak Spanish.

(correct: I speak Spanish.)

#### TOO FEW SYLLABLES

I rent' 'partment yest' day.  
(I rented an apartment yesterday.)

Our cit' has new gov' ment.  
(Our city has a new government.)

#### How can you begin to count syllables?

First say your name. How many separate puffs of air can you feel? How many syllables are there in your first name? Now say your full name. How many puffs of air do you feel now? How many syllables are in your full name?

example:	Mickey	(2 syllables)
	Mickey Mouse	(3 syllables)
your first name:	_____	(__ syllables)
your full name:	_____	(__ syllables)
some other names:	_____	(__ syllables)
	_____	(__ syllables)
name of your country:	_____	(__ syllables)
names of other countries:	_____	(__ syllables)
	_____	(__ syllables)

You can tap your hand, foot or pencil to find the number of syllables in words. How many syllables are in each of the following words? Use your hand, foot or pencil to help you find the correct number of syllables in each word below. A few of them have been done for you.

sky (1), house ( ), airport (2), boss ( ), elevator ( ), tuna salad (4), aerobics ( ),  
actors ( ), cape ( ), chicken fajita ( ), casual ( ), dietician ( ), soapy ( ), tractor ( ),  
alphabetical ( ), Jonathan ( ), decomposition ( ), exhausting ( ), incomprehensible ( )

## Syllables

### WHAT ARE SYLLABIC CONSONANTS?

Syllables: Review

The previous page explains that:

- a syllable is a piece of a word.
- a syllable has a vowel sound in the middle
- vowels are continuous, like singing

Syllables: New Information

- the letters /l/ and /n/ are very *vocalic* (this means they are similar to vowels)
- sometimes the letters /l/ and /n/ can be separate syllables /l/, /n/ (we call these *syllabic consonants*)

The following words have two possible pronunciations. For example, 'cotton' can be pronounced [kat n] or [katn]. Native speakers say it both ways. Both ways are correct.

### Practice with Syllabic Consonants in Words

Say the following words.  
Can you make the /l/ one syllable?

table	saddle
eagle	tunnel
kettle	fertile
turtle	puddle

Say the following words.  
Can you make the /n/ one syllable?

cotton	mitten
written	kitten
sudden	mountain
button	Bill Clinton

### Practice with Syllabic Consonants in Sentences

Use the words above to make some practice sentences. Can you pronounce the /n/ or the /l/ like syllables? Two of them have been done for you.

1. I want to buy a new table.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
6. I need to borrow your cotton shirt.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.