

*Integrating the Standards: Phonological Awareness*  
*Phonological Awareness Instruction – Step by Step*  
**Syllable Awareness Activities**

Once children understand that sentences are made of words, they begin to learn that words are also made of smaller units, called syllables. At this level, children learn to blend syllables together to form words and to segment words into syllables. Children might also delete a syllable from word. In general, blending tasks are easier than segmentation tasks, and segmentation tasks are easier than deletion tasks.

**Using Compound Words to combine syllable**

- Say it Fast! A list of compound words, can come in handy for playing this game. You can do this orally, by saying the parts of a word to children and have them blend it back together. This would be a great transition activity.
- Partner Syllable Blending. This is a variation of Say it Fast! First, you ask 2 students to crouch on the floor next to each other. Using a "mystery word" that no one else knows (e.g., "fireman"), whisper the first syllable to the first child ("fire"), and the second syllable to the second child ("man"). Then have the students "pop" up, one at a time, saying their syllable. The group, or one child you select, guesses the mystery word.
- Syllable blending activities can easily be incorporated during read-alouds. A great book for this type of activity that features many examples of compound words is *Once There Was a Bull ...frog* by Rick Walton, and *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi and Ron Barrett. Make a list of the books in your collection that use compound words.

**Using Compound Words to delete syllables**

- Soundtooning is an inexpensive commercial product that uses picture cards puzzles that can be broken apart and matched to make a compound word. Be sure to play the game first in small groups before putting it out into a center. This game has multiple variations and can easily be used to demonstrate combining, separating and deletion tasks.
- When working on deletion tasks using compound words be sure to use words that they know and have used in other activities. It's important to establish a consistent way to practice deletion with children to be sure that children understand the language around the task so children are clear on what you are asking them to do.

For example: "My word is *bullfrog*, say *bullfrog* (pause for child's response) now say *bullfrog* without saying *frog*. (Child's response).

This is the framework to use as children practice deletion.

1. First say the word – "My word is \_\_\_\_\_."
2. Pause for the child to repeat the word.
3. Provide the task – "now say \_\_\_\_\_ without saying \_\_\_\_\_."

Ask for the first syllable in multiple practices. Then ask for the last syllable.

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**Activities regular words to combine and segment syllables**

- ❑ As you are reading, periodically stretch out a word by syllable: (e.g., "Some animals laugh at the gangly gi-raffe"). Then point to a student to "say it fast," or blend the word together. Then repeat the blended word or reread the sentence to ensure that meaning is not lost, particularly if it took some time for the student to respond.
- ❑ A fun way to provide blending practice is to use a puppet that talks in a very different way. Model by having the puppet stretch words out by syllable (e.g., instead of saying "bicycle," he would say "bi - cy - cle"). Have students practice deciphering what the puppet is saying. Again, a bag of pictures or objects can be used as prompts. Once students are familiar with this game, they can try picking from the bag and saying the words the way the puppet would.
- ❑ A great place to begin to help children in segmenting syllables is by clapping children's names. First, model by using several names of contrasting length (e.g., yours and two other students'). Pronounce each name, syllable by syllable, while clapping it out. Next have the students repeat the name, clapping each syllable. Then ask the students how many syllables they heard. You can then proceed to clap out lots of names, either together as a group or individually. Once students can clap their own names, you can put pictures of each student in a bag, or the names of each student in a bag. You would then call on individual students to pick another child's picture or name out of the bag to clap. The rest of the group then "checks" it by clapping it together. When students can accurately clap their first names (and the first names of children in their group), they can practice clapping their first and last names. You can also add a rhythmic chant such as:  
    "Bippity, bippity, bumble, bee,  
    Tell me what your name should be - /Sta-/-cy/"
- ❑ An alternative to clapping syllables and a perfect activity when kids need to stretch, is a variation of "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes." Instead of singing, however, you touch the corresponding body part as you segment a word. For example, with the word "alligator," you would segment the word slowly, touching your head saying "al-," shoulders saying "li-," knees saying "ga-," and toes saying "-tor." For three syllable words, you would just touch head, shoulders and knees; for two-syllable words, head and shoulders; and for one-syllable words, head. An easier variation that eliminates the need for four-syllable words is to play "Head, Waist, and Toes."
- ❑ When working on deletion tasks follow the same procedure outlined with compound words. You want to be sure that children understand what you are asking them to do. So it is important to follow a consistent framework to practice deletion.
- ❑ Picture cards of multi-syllable words are quite useful, for the "mystery" activities described above as well as games that reinforce syllable segmenting. Sets of multi-syllable pictures can be found in teacher resource books such as *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children*, or you can select pictures from the sets of initial sound pictures that accompany many core reading programs. Often these are

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large photographs that are high-interest, and they usually contain pictures of words with a variety of syllables (e.g., astronaut, bear, candy, dinosaur). Using clip art to make your own pictures is another alternative.

- ❑ Small sets of picture cards can be used to play generic racetrack games. After choosing a picture, you move forward as many spaces as there are syllables. You can also use small pictures to make Bingo boards. After choosing a picture, you would stretch the word out by syllable (rab-bit), and the students would mark the corresponding picture on their Bingo boards.

This is the framework to use when practicing deletion tasks with children.

1. First say the word – “My word is \_\_\_\_\_, say \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. Pause for the child to repeat the word.
3. Provide the task – “Now say \_\_\_\_\_ without saying \_\_\_\_\_.”

Practice this task first with deleting the first syllable, then practice by deleting the ending syllable.