

# Improving children's awareness of syllables

## What are syllables?

Put simply, syllables are the number of 'beats' which make up a word:

	has <b>1</b> syllable
	has <b>2</b> syllables
	has <b>3</b> syllables

## Why is it important?

- When children miss out syllables in a word it can make them very hard to understand as so much information is missing. Helping them to use the right number of syllables is a quick way to make it easier for people to understand them.
- Being able to break a word into syllables is a very important in learning to read and spell.
- If you break a word down into syllables for children, it makes it much easier for them to hear and remember the sounds in it. This will make them more likely to get it right the next time.

## How to help?

Firstly, you will need to decide what to call syllables so that children will understand what you mean. For most children it is best to talk about the number of "beats" or "claps" in a word. Many younger children will find "claps" easier to understand.

For all of the ideas, either clap out the syllables in the word or beat it on a drum/tambourine. Make sure you do one clap for each syllable as you say it. Start by clapping the word with them and gradually see if they can clap them by themselves.

Be careful with one clap words! Many children want to add an extra clap on the end. For example “ball” would become “ball er”. Model it for them first so they can hear how to do it.

## 1. Clap out names of family and friends.

- Talk about the number of claps each person has in their name.

eg " James and Ben - they both have one clap in their name don't they?  
Stephanie - that's a very long name isn't it? - it has three claps, can you hear? Ste phan ie. etc.

**“How many claps have YOU  
got in your name?”**

- Clap out someone's name and see if the child can tell you who it was.
- See if you can find someone with a certain number of claps in their name.

**“let’s see who is first to find  
someone with four claps in their  
name!”**

## 2. Play sorting games

Use the pictures provided or if possible, put real objects in a bag and sort them into different piles according to the number of claps they have. Use the syllable clap cards to label each pile. Start with things that only have either 1 or 3 syllables as this is easier for children to hear the difference. Then progress to sorting words or objects with 1, 2 & 3 syllables.



If the child cannot count reliably then they are not ready for this activity and you should leave it for a few weeks and try again.

Let the child choose an item from the bag, clap it out together and then let them decide which pile it should go on.

### Try sorting:

- Food.  
eg. pear      bis cuits      ba na na
- Clothes.  
eg. shorts      trou sers      an or ak
- Toys.  
eg. ball      ted dy      di no saur
- Topic words e.g. minibeasts  
eg. worm      spi der      but ter fly

### 3. Make a scrapbook

Cut pictures out of catalogues and magazines and make scrapbooks of things with 1, 2 & 3 claps.





### 4. Always clap out any new words that the child learns

This way they are much more likely to learn them with the right pattern.

eg.

It's spaghetti. Listen.. spa ghet ti - 3 claps.



<p>2</p> 	<p>4</p> 
<p>1</p> 	<p>3</p> 



pear



apple



banana



dog



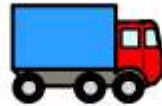
rabbit



elephant



bike



lorry



aeroplane



egg



ice cream



spaghetti



helicopter



fire engine



rhinoceros



worm



spider



butterfly