

non syllabic <e>

A syllabic spelling is one that adds a syllable to a word. Vowels tend to be syllabic and consonants non-syllabic. Compare adding the consonant <s> and the vowel <a> to 'tub'

tub > tubs tulba

An <e> added to a word is, however, often non-syllabic. Non-syllabic <e> has several functions.

It may indicate a change in sound value of

- the previous vowel: hat > hate
- the previous consonant: rag > rage
- both vowel & consonant: hug > huge
- neither vowel nor consonant: laps > lapse

In all cases the <e> is attached to the previous consonant spelling to form a two- or three-letter spelling.

love hate since giraffe

reduced vowels

Vowel phonemes in stressed syllables are fully articulated: the mouth fully forms the required shape to enunciate the vowel. But vowel phonemes in unstressed syllables tend to be reduced in quality.

Vowels are typically reduced to one of two sounds:

- /uh/ (a **schwa**) in along, kindness, doctor,
- /i/ (a **schwi**) in village, lettuce, pocket

Identifying and overpronouncing reduced vowels is key to spelling them, so children should understand that:

- the <or> in doctor represents /uh/ but in a spelling voice /or/ to aid spelling
- the <e> in pocket represents /i/ but in a spelling voice /e/ to aid spelling

Reduced vowels are represented as a spelling like any other.

doctor polcket allong village

separating <r>

Many English vowel spellings contain <r>.

c ar ch air h ear h orn g erm

Where the <r> is either at the end of a word or followed by a consonant spelling it forms part of the vowel spelling.

h ear t b air n b ear d p ort ear n

Where the <r> vowel is followed by a vowel spelling it is separated from the vowel spelling and forms an /r/ consonant at the start of the following syllable.

s alf alri aeriel floral jury

Compare the following:

ch air ch air ed ch air ing

p ure p urelly p urest

s t ore s t ori my s t ori y

elision

Elision is the omission of a sound when speaking. Elision typically occurs for two reasons.

Much elision is due to variations in accent.

history average Wednesday

Other elision is caused by a sequence of impossible or awkward to pronounce phonemes at morpheme boundaries.

dustbin handsome cupboard

Elisions are always pronounced in a spelling voice so are represented as spellings that represent these overpronounced sounds.

hilstory alverage Wednesday

dustibin handsome cupboard

silent letters

There are no silent letters in Sounds & Syllables. Instead, they combine with other letters to form two-letter spellings that represents phonemes like any other spelling.

Letters that are commonly considered to be silent are represented here in pink. The digraph that they form part of is in bold font.

- o /b/ **bu**ild
- o /k/ s**ch**ool con**lqu**er
- o /f/ s**o**l**ft**en
- o /g/ **gh**ost **gu**ess
- o /h/ **wh**o
- o /j/ **ba**ld**g**er a**ldj**ust
- o /m/ **th**u**mb** au**ltu**mn
- o /n/ **si**gn **kn**ot
- o /r/ **rh**y**me** **wr**ist
- o /s/ **sc**ent **ca**l**st**le **sw**ord
- o /t/ **dou**bt rel**cei**pt **tw**o
- o /w/ **wh**y

dark /l/

A dark /l/ is preceded by a schwa phoneme. Where the schwa follows a consonant phoneme, the schwa and dark /l/ are separated into two spellings

mel**a**l **cha**p**e**l e**l**v**i**l s**yl**mb**o**l

This is not possible with <le> which is a two-phoneme spelling /uh+l/.

a**pp**le **cy**cle a**ng**le

In some accents, a schwa is also inserted between some vowel phonemes and dark /l/:

| | no schwa | schwa |
|------|----------|---------------|
| oil | /oy l/ | /oy uh l/ |
| mile | /m ie l/ | /m ie uh l/ |
| foul | /f ow l/ | /f ow uh l/ |

Following a vowel, dark /l/ is always represented with no schwa:

oi**l** mi**le** fou**l**

two-phoneme spellings

A small number of spellings in English represent two phonemes. These include:

- o /y+ue/ written as /yue/ in **cu**be, **few**, **va**lue and **eu**phoria
- o /k+s/ written as /ks/ in **box** and **ax**e
- o /g+z/ written as /gz/ in **ex**it
- o /uh+l/ written as /ul/ in **bott**le
- o /uh+m/ written as /um/ in **pr**ism

<qu> is not treated as a single spelling that represents the two sounds /k + w/. It is instead separated into two spellings: <q> spelling /k/ and <u> spelling /w/.

quick **qu**een **qu**est

In a small number of words <qu> does represent the single phoneme /k/.

con**lqu**er **qu**iche mo**lsqu**ito

gemination

Gemination is consonant lengthening whereby the articulation of a consonant phoneme is longer than that of other similar consonant phonemes. Compare the /n/ found in **un**able and the geminated /n/ found in **unn**amed.

Geminated consonants are typically found at morpheme boundaries, and are often, but not always, spelled with doubled letters*.

un + **n**amed mis + **sp**ell

mid + **d**ay sole + **ly**

Geminated consonants are represented as two separate spellings.

u**n** | **n**a**m**e**d** m**i** | **s** | **s**p**e**ll

m**i** | **d** | **d**a**y** s**o** | **l** | **l**y

* most doubled letters are not geminated and represent a single phoneme: **ra** | **bb**it **tu** | **nn**e**l** **fu** | **nn**y