

# SYLLABLE DIVISION IN ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** presented article indicates the syllabic structure of English language and the rules of phonetic syllable division. Also there has been stated about factors that determine the rules for syllable vision, free and checked character of the vowels, monophthongs and diphthongs, a syllable boundary English affricates. Moreover, characteristics of syllabic consonants also have been stated. Sometimes a syllable consists phonetically only of a consonant or consonants. Such a consonant is a syllabic consonant.

**Keywords:** syllable division, free or checked character, monophthongs, vowels.

It has already been stated that the syllabic structure of every language has its own peculiarities, including those of **syllable division**. One of the peculiarities of syllable division in English is that a vowel separated from a succeeding vowel by only one consonant always occurs in an *open* syllable. This is effected by making the intervocalic consonant a *strong-end* one, but having made it finally-strong the speaker has *ipso facto* effected syllable division before it. In other words, the speaker's choice of the strong-end, weak-end or double-peaked form of a consonant is only the *articulatory means* of effecting syllable division in accordance with the peculiarities of the syllabic structure of the language. There are a number of factors determining the rules for syllable division in every language which are put into effect by using one of the three forms of every consonant [1. 56-89]. All these factors are closely interdependent; none of them operates singly; they operate in certain combinations. The *free* or *checked character* of the vowels determines syllable division usually in conjunction with the presence of stress on the vowel if there is only one consonant between the two vowels. Since a vowel can form a syllable by itself (of the V type, as /a/ (a) or /ə:/ (awe) and such a syllable is also an arc of loudness produced by an arc of articulatory effort, such a vowel must have a weak beginning, a strong centre and a weak end. All English vowels pronounced in isolation have this form, i.e. they are *free*, which is just another way of saying that they have a weak end, i.e. they are weak-end sounds [2. 21]. The English free (weak-end) vowels are the long monophthongs [i:, a:, o:, U:, ɜ:] and the diphthongs [ei, ai, oi, au, ou, iə, eə, uə]. It is for this reason that they are sometimes called *fading* vowels. It is natural for these English vowels to preserve their free nature in words of the syllabic type (C) CV, although the upward slope of the syllable will be formed now by the prevocalic consonants.

Syllable divisions in *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* (LPD) [3. 1827]. Are shown by spacing, e.g. *playtime*/'pleɪtaɪm/. In *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (EPD) by Daniel Jones, syllable division is marked with a dot – [.] as recommended by the International Phonetic Association (the IPA) [4. 588], e.g. *admirable* ['.æd.mə.r. ə.bl].

The following **rules of phonetic syllable** division are adopted in LPD:-

1. **Asyllable boundary** is found wherever there is a **word boundary**, and also coincides with the morphological boundary between elements in a **compound**:

*displace* [dis 'pleɪs] *become* [bi 'kʌm] *countless* ['kauntləs] *hardware* ['hɑ:dweə] CVC-CSVC, CV-CVS, CVSC-SVC, CVC-SV.

2. **Consonants** are syllabified with whichever of the two adjacent vowels is more strongly stressed, e.g. *farmer* ['fɑ:m ə], *agenda* [ə 'dʒɛndə]. If they are both unstressed, it goes with the **leftward** one: e.g. *cinema* ['sɪn əmə], *delicious* [di 'lɪʃəs], *deliberate* [di'libərət].

3. The English **diphthongs** are unisyllabic, they make one vowel phoneme, while the so-called triphthongs are disyllabic, because they consist of a diphthong + the neutral vowel/schwa: *table science flower* CV-CS CV-VSC CSV-V

4. The English **affricates** cannot be split: *catching* ['kætʃɪŋ]

Sometimes a syllable consists phonetically only of a consonant or consonants. If so, a consonant (or one of them) is **nasal** (usually [n]) or a **liquid** (usually [l] or [r] in AmE), for instance, in the usual pronunciation of *suddenly* ['sʌdn̩li]. Such a consonant is a **syllabic consonant**. The IPA provides a special **diacritic** [̩] to show syllabicity [4. 21]. Thus it is possible though not usual to say ['sʌdn̩li]. Likely syllabic consonants are shown in LPD with the raised symbol [̩], thus ['sʌdn̩li]: a raised symbol indicates a sound whose inclusion LPD does not recommend, hence this notation implies that LPD prefers bare [n] in the second syllable. Syllabic consonants are also sometimes used where LPD shows italic [̩] plus a nasal or a liquid, e.g. *distant* ['dɪstənt̩]. **Phonetic (spoken)** syllables must not be confused with **orthographic (written)** syllables. Syllables in writing are also called **syllabographs**. A most **general rule** claims that division of words into syllables in writing is passed on **the morphological principle** which demands that the part of a word which is separated should be either a prefix, or a suffix or a root (morphograph), e.g. *pic-ture* ['pɪk-tʃə].

### *References*

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