

# Syllable Stress

## What is a Syllable?

A syllable is unit of sound made from a single vowel, or single vowel/consonant combination - note that syllables never have more than one vowel sound in them.

Eg: bit; a; un; as; dog; re; ist; bi

- Monosyllable / monosyllabic - words with one syllable
- Disyllable / disyllabic - words with two syllables, also called bisyllabic by some
- Trisyllable / trisyllabic - words with three syllables
- Polysyllable / polysyllabic - words with four or more syllables, however often people will refer to word with three or more syllables as polysyllabic.

## Feeling the Beat

The easiest way to determine how many syllables are in a particular word is to sound it out - or even better clap it out. Clap along while you try the following words:

Monosyllabic: dog there bike he walk bounce

Dissyllabic: doc/tor Fri/day o/ver yel/low chick/en

Trisyllabic: hos/pit/al yes/ter/day de/tec/tive am/bi/ence

Polysyllabic: un/wa/ver/ing no/tif/ica/tion re/an/i/ma/tion pri/va/ti/zation

## Syllable Stress:

Syllables break our words up into sections which can be stressed, or unstressed. Which syllable is stressed, alters the pronunciation of the word. Try saying the following words aloud while stressing the first syllable:

doc/tor Fri/day o/ver mis/take pur/ple

Now try it again putting the stress on the second syllable.

doc/tor Fri/day o/ver mis/take pur/ple

Which one sounds better? If you thought the first set sounded better you are correct. All of the above words should have their first syllable stressed.

Here are some more examples. The bold O will show you which syllable should be stressed in each word:

monosyllabic O: bike cat black

disyllabic O o: prob/lem en/gine yel/low

disyllabic o O: be/side di/vide un/do

trisyllabic O o o: dif/fi/cult hos/pit/al of/fi/cer

trisyllabic o O o: de/tec/tive pro/fess/or re/dun/dant