

Chapter 1

Syllable Awareness

The first prerequisite on the syllabic route to confident literacy is a good feel for the syllabic rhythms of our language. This must be developed in students of all ages and stages and must never be taken for granted. Students with dyslexia, in particular, may not develop this easily and may need plenty of guided practice and regular reinforcement.

Here we are working at the auditory level only, just with the sounds of words. It is important in the suggestions that follow that the written word is not seen at all, or discovered. Syllabic knowledge cannot be used in reading or writing until a strong awareness with the spoken word is established.

Introducing the idea

Here are some of the ways I have introduced this idea. Any approach, of course, must be tailored to the age, ability and stage of the student and should lead him to discover the idea himself.

1a Syllable Quiz

The tutor quizzes the student, using for example: "Squid has 2, Duck has 1, Anthony has 3... What am I talking about?"

The words can be spoken with an exaggerated beat if necessary, to get the idea across, or some sort of gait can be substituted for the words if the student is struggling.

Any words can be chosen, to suit the student, for example: "Lamb has 1, Bradford has 2, Manchester has 3, 1" or "tree has 1, car has 2, junction has 3."

Once the idea of the beats in the word has been deduced, the word syllable should be given, if it is not already known, and the fact that this is how we speak, by getting our language in chunks, is syllables.

Chapter 8

The VC/V Pattern

And now we have the 'fun!' There are words that look like *whew* words but sound like *vefew* words. They are words of two syllables with one consonant between the vowels, but the first vowel is short. Examples: **rob**in, **pan**ic, **fin**ish, **den**im, **stud**y. These are the exact same two syllable words as for to read and write. I tend not to spend too much time on them as I do not want to dilute or blur the *vefew* and *whew* message. Students just need to know that there are some words like this. They need familiarity with the most common of the words together with some practice reading a mix of *vefew* and *whew* words and some practice writing these words which sound like *vefew* words but do not have a double consonant in the middle.

Introducing the idea

Start by introducing the pattern with wooden letters.

1a Wooden letters

The letters are set out in alphabetical order in a large arc.

The student is asked to listen to, then take out in order these letters (use letter names here) **a - e - i - o - u**. With these letters in front of him he is given two cards each with a 'v' on and asked to put one of these above each vowel. He is asked to put cards with a 'w' on above any consonants that come between the vowels. He then places a pencil or similar object after the medial consonant, dividing the word in two. Now he reads the word aloud. He is told that this is a *whew* word, that it starts with a **closed** syllable and so the first vowel sound is short. He will only know whether a word is a *whew* or a *vefew* word by saying it, trying out both long and short vowel sounds if necessary.



The Syllable Route

Ideas and activities to motivate and empower students with dyslexia

Syllable knowledge is not a side road or a by-pass; it is an essential part of the main route. For many it really is the light that shows the way. Our students need to see that literacy isn't a confusing muddle of guesswork; syllable knowledge can be motivating and empowering as it logic outs through the muddle.

Motivated by the inspiring reaction of her students to her syllable route approach, Linda Riley has set out here an order for the training of syllable skills, together with suggested methods, activities, word lists and resources. The approach is intended for use during focused literacy intervention for students of any age with dyslexia or related literacy difficulties in a 1:1 or small group setting. It complements the ideas and activities provided in her other books in the "Can We Do That Again?" series.

The approach provides a slightly different route that, for many students, can shine a light on a clear path which was until then obscured by a confusing fog. It can illuminate, motivate and empower.

More books in the "Can We Do That Again?" series...



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