

# Sort Out Your Syllables

Teacher's Resource Book

SYLLABLE KNOWLEDGE

RECOGNIZING VOWEL SPELLING PATTERNS

PRONOUNCING VOWEL SPELLING PATTERNS

SYLLABIFYING WORDS

SAMPLE (US edition)

■ Joy Allcock

Foreword by Professor John Hattie

# ■ Foreword

by John Hattie

Laureate Professor

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For many, learning to read and write is not an easy task. Across many of the studies evaluating effective literacy instruction, there is one major common element — the focus on sound is crucial.

Children go through phases, from writing familiar words as unanalyzed wholes, to making word-sound connections and realizing that written spellings represent sounds in spoken words, and on to the ability to decode the sounds in more complex words. Perhaps it is not surprising that as the child's knowledge of phonology and in particular letter-sound correspondences increases, they begin to develop an understanding of the complexity of the alphabetic code, the role of prefix and suffix principles, and the role that syllable structure and spelling conventions play in reading and writing more complex words.

For some, this understanding may be acquired through the act of reading and writing. Thus, some have argued that good teacher modeling and incidental methods of instruction are adequate, but these are hardly sufficient for those students who do not learn this way — they require intentional, deliberate teaching. An understanding of the English writing and spelling systems needs to be taught when it is not caught.

Many students at Grade 4 and beyond who read below grade level lack skills with spelling and decoding unfamiliar, multisyllabic words. These students need direct instruction — here is where this book comes in.

This book starts the student on the road to strategically analyzing multisyllabic words in their reading and to spelling them in their writing. Based on decades of research and practice, *Sort Out Your Syllables* provides rich resources to teach all students, and in particular those who struggle with decoding and spelling.

This is a resource for students who may have missed out on intentional instruction in these core skills. It is a fast-paced teaching resource that builds on the knowledge of phonemic awareness and the alphabetic code taught in its prequel, *Catch Up Your Code*.

*Sort Out Your Syllables* follows the Direct Instruction model to provide structured, teacher-directed instruction, peer support, immediate feedback, and

opportunities for individual practice to apply the strategies taught. Teachers themselves do not need to have in-depth knowledge of the syllable structure of written English to use it because the lessons are carefully written and sequenced to ensure success.

This book teaches simple strategies that get around the complex and often confusing syllabification rules that many students simply cannot use. It provides teachers with an opportunity to make a real difference to students who say, “I can’t read (or write) that word — it’s too long!”

I have known Joy Allcock for some decades as the ‘Queen’ of teaching the skills for reading and spelling. With this book, Allcock adds to her already weighty set of wonderful resources that make teachers’ lives more efficient and effective. As she has contended, there are specific known skills that are precursors to reading and spelling that can and should be taught. Once a student has developed some mastery, then a virtuous circle can commence of using these skills for increased proficiency in reading, spelling, and comprehension. This is an impressive book and essential on every teacher’s bookshelf.

**John Hattie**  
**Laureate Professor**  
**Melbourne Graduate School of Education**

# ■ Author's note

Many years ago, I was in a classroom and I heard a student say, “I hate words!” He was an intelligent, articulate boy who hated reading and writing. I thought to myself at the time, *it's not really words he hates — it's print*. Since then, I have met many students who do not enjoy reading and writing. Some of these students are working at or even above grade level, but their skills with the written word do not match their far greater skills with the spoken word.

What is it about written English that makes it such a challenge for many students? What can we do to make it easier? Many people have no idea that there is a system to how written English works. What I have found is that teaching students to understand how words work — to understand the structure of written words — provides them with a system to work from. Instead of seeing 12 letters that they try to ‘sound out’ one letter at a time, they see parts of the word (the alphabetic code, syllables, a prefix, a suffix, root word) that help them decode it and understand its meaning.

As students move up the years, they encounter texts that are longer and more difficult containing content that is not familiar to them. In these texts, they also encounter unfamiliar and often multisyllabic words that they need to decipher. For many, the challenge of working with unfamiliar multisyllabic words is too great.

*Sort Out Your Syllables* was written to provide students with a strategy to tackle reading and writing unfamiliar multisyllabic words. It builds on the foundation of skills taught in *Catch Up Your Code*, which focuses on understanding, recognizing, and using the alphabetic code.

The strategy taught in *Sort Out Your Syllables* provides students with a logical system for decoding unfamiliar multisyllabic words that will lead them to the correct, or close to correct, pronunciation of the word, which in turn leads to its meaning.

This strategy will accelerate the reading skills of students who know what words mean when they hear them but who struggle to decode them. It will also accelerate writing skills by making it easier for students to sound out and spell any multisyllabic word in their spoken vocabulary.

I hope that this book will help all those students who ‘hate words’ to discover the magic of written English.

**Joy Allcock, M.Ed. (Hons.)**

# ■ Contents

*Sort Out Your Syllables* is available in New Zealand/Australia and US editions, in both physical and digital formats. Both editions are versioned for regional spelling, pronunciation, and terminology differences and for appropriate second language support.

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**Note:** The practice activities and activity answers for lessons 29 and 43 are also included in this sample.

# The structure of *Sort Out Your Syllables*

*Sort Out Your Syllables* provides students with a plan for reading and writing multisyllabic words that are unfamiliar to them in their print form. The strategies used provide students with a **consistent and simple approach** to finding syllables in words, avoiding the need to use complex syllabification rules.

**This approach supports decoding** — students get as close as possible to the correct pronunciation when reading an unfamiliar multisyllabic word. Sometimes the final pronunciation of the word may not be completely correct, but it is often close enough for the student to self-correct.

**This approach supports spelling** — students learn the various vowel spelling patterns (graphemes) and the most appropriate ones to use, based on the sound of the vowel and its position in a syllable.

*Sort Out Your Syllables* is divided into sections:

## Syllable knowledge

- Background, assessments, and introduction lessons

## Recognizing vowel spelling patterns

- Recognizing the nine types of vowel spelling patterns

## Pronouncing vowel spelling patterns

- Recognizing and pronouncing open and closed syllables
- Pronouncing vowel spelling patterns in different ways in other types of syllables
- Pronouncing the schwa vowel sound in unstressed syllables

## Dividing words into syllables

- Learn and practice the four-step strategy for breaking words into syllables


**In these sections, students are taught:**

- To hear and recognize syllables in the words they say.
- To segment spoken words into syllables in order to sound them out for spelling.
- To recognize vowel spelling patterns in words.
- To discover different ways to pronounce vowel spelling patterns, depending on where the vowel pattern occurs in a syllable.
- A simple and consistent four-step strategy for dividing written words into syllables.




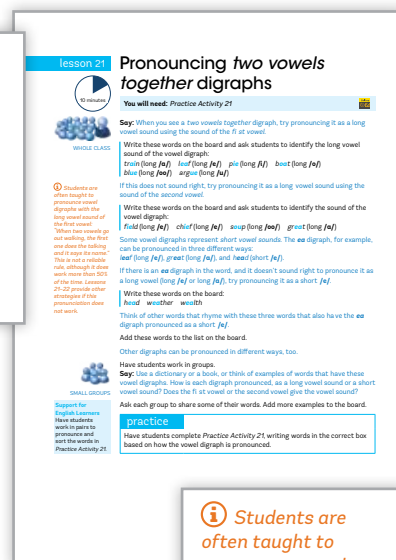
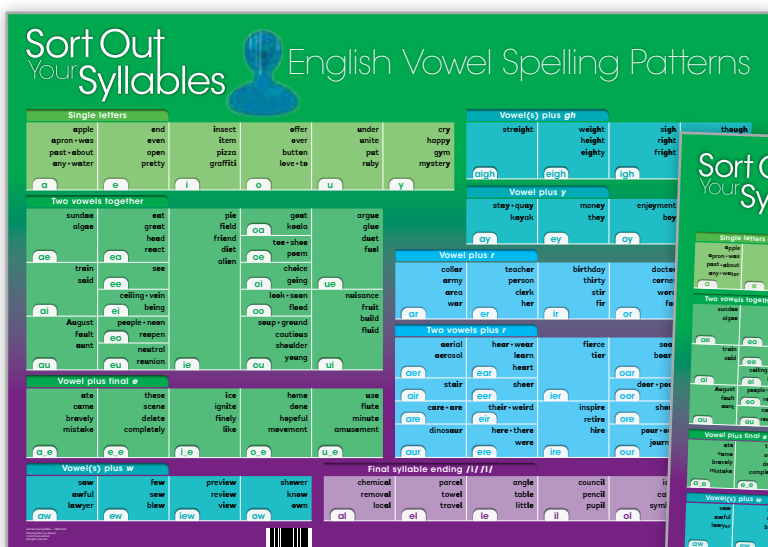
## Lesson structure

The lessons in this **Teacher's Resource Book** are 10 minutes long and are supported by short follow-up activities in the **Student Practice Book** (also available online), which can be undertaken at any time. The daily 10-minute lessons provide students with opportunities for repetition and skill development that allow knowledge to be accumulated rapidly through exposure to short, regular periods of instruction.

Informational notes for the teacher are indicated with an  icon. Additional support for English learners is also included where appropriate. These tips can also be used with other students who need extra support.


## Supporting resources

- The poster-size **Wall Chart** provides a visual reference to the vowel spelling patterns taught in *Sort Out Your Syllables*. Display the chart in the classroom so that students have access to it throughout the lessons.
- Students can also refer to the vowel spelling patterns using their own copies of the **Desktop Card**.
- Vowel Spelling Pattern Cards and Labels** help students recognize and classify the nine types of vowel spelling patterns in the English language.
- All program assessments and practice activities, as well as additional digital references, are available online at **Code-Ed.co.nz** .

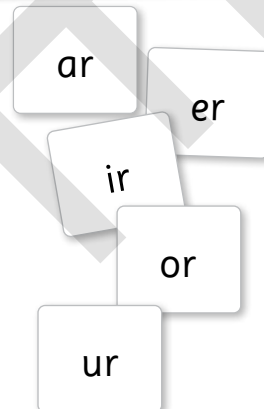


### Support for English Learners

Have students work in pairs to pronounce and sort the words in *Practice Activity 21*.

 **Students are often taught to pronounce vowel digraphs with the long vowel sound of the first vowel:** "When two vowels go out walking, the first one does the talking and it says its name." This is not a reliable rule, although it does work more than 50% of the time. Lessons 21–22 provide other strategies if this pronunciation does not work.

### Vowel plus r





## lesson 29

# Vowel plus *r*



10 minutes



WHOLE CLASS



SMALL GROUPS

### Support for English Learners

Ask students to practice pronouncing these *r* digraphs by reading each list aloud after they complete *Practice Activity 29*.

**You will need:** *Practice Activity 29*



**Say:** There are five common *vowel plus r* spelling patterns. These digraphs usually represent the /*ar*/, /*or*/, and /*er*/ sounds.

Write these digraphs on the board with these examples for each:

<i>ar</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>ir</i>	<i>ur</i>
car	for	her	fi	fur
army	fortune	person	thirty	curtain
hard	corn	perk	shirt	hurt

Have students work in groups.

Ask students to think of other words that have *vowel plus r* digraphs.

Ask each group to share some of their words. Add more examples to the board.

**Say:** What do you notice about the position of these *r* digraphs in syllables? (They can occur anywhere — at the end of a syllable, inside a syllable, and they can sometimes be a syllable on their own.)

## practice

Have students complete *Practice Activity 29*, creating their own lists of words containing *vowel plus r* digraphs.

## lesson 30

# Two vowels plus *r*



10 minutes



WHOLE CLASS

**i** The two vowels plus *r* patterns are not always considered to represent single phonemes, but they are included in this book as vowel spelling patterns in a syllable. Pronunciation of these spelling patterns can vary. The *r* is sometimes pronounced /*r*/ and sometimes not pronounced at all.

**You will need:** *Practice Activity 30*



**Say:** There are many different spelling patterns that include two vowels and an *r*. These patterns often represent the /*air*/, /*ear*/, /*ar*/, /*or*/, and /*er*/ sounds, but they can represent other sounds as well.

The /*air*/ and /*ear*/ sounds can be difficult to distinguish between. They are also often spelled with the same patterns (*near*/*bear*, *here*/*where*).

Practice the /*air*/ sound by dropping your jaw and opening your mouth to 'take a breath of air.' Practice the /*ear*/ sound by saying /*ear*/ and making your mouth 'grin from ear to ear.'

Put up an image for *air* and *ear* on the board and write some words for each sound.



fair  
bear  
where



near  
steer  
here

lesson 43



WHOLE CLASS

# Syllables with a vowel *plus r* digraph

You will need: *Practice Activity 43*



**Say:** Today we will apply our four-step strategy to words with a *vowel plus r* digraph. I'll demonstrate with a word. Then everyone will complete their own work before we work through the answers on the board.

Write this word on the board:

*purchasing*

**Step 1: Color-code the vowel spelling patterns.**

*pur*chas*ing*

**Step 2: Divide the word after a prefix and before a suffix.**

*pur*chas/*ing*

**Step 3: Divide the word into the correct number of syllables.**

The *vowel plus r* digraphs are often on the end of a syllable (*gar/den, far/, star/*), but they also occur as syllables on their own (*or/gan, ar/gue*) or inside a syllable (*cart, form*).

*pur*/chas/*ing*

**Step 4: Pronounce each syllable — does the word sound right?**

*If not, change your dividing strategy.*

Say the word and write the vowel sound above each syllable for the correct pronunciation.

/er/ U S  
*pur*/chas/*ing*

## Support for English Learners

Review the *vowel plus r* digraphs and example words on the Wall Chart or Desktop Card. Then work with individuals or groups as they complete *Practice Activity 43*.

## practice

Have students complete *Practice Activity 43*, dividing words that contain *vowel plus r* digraphs into syllables and indicating the vowel sound in each syllable.

When students have finished, go through the activity on the board like this:

**Step 1: Color-code the vowel spelling patterns.**

*organic fortunately germinate purchase thirsty gardener  
enormous familiar purpose forward article remark*

**Step 2: Divide after a prefix and before a suffix.**

*organ/ic fortun/ate/ly\* germin/ate purch/ase thirst/y garden/er  
enorm/ous famili/ar purpos/ forward artic/le re/mark*

**Step 3: Divide the word into the correct number of syllables.**

*or/gan/ic for/tun/ate/ly\* ger/min/ate pur/ch/ase thirst/y gar/den/er  
e/norm/ous fam/il/i/ar purpos/ forward ar/ti/cle re/mark*

**Step 4: Pronounce each syllable — does the word sound right?**

*If not, change your dividing strategy.*

Say the word and write the vowel sound above each syllable for the correct pronunciation.

*/or/ S S/U /or/ U/L U L /er/ S L /er/ U /er/ L /ar/ U U  
or/gan/ic for/tu/nate/ly\* ger/min/ate pur/ch/ase thirst/y gar/den/er  
L/U /or/ U U S L U /er/ U /or/ U /ar/ U U L/U /ar/  
e/norm/ous fam/il/i/ar purpos/ forward ar/ti/cle re/mark*

*\*If there is a single vowel followed by a consonant before the suffix, the consonant goes in the suffix syllable. The single vowel might be in an open syllable (fa/ded) or a syllable on its own (terr/i/fy).*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## 29 Vowel plus *r*

Create your own lists of words with *vowel plus r* patterns.

**ar** for the /ar/ sound

car

**ar** for the /or/ sound

warm

***er***

her

*ir*

shirt

**or** for the /or/ sound

fork

**or** for the /er/ sound

work

***ur***

fur

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**43** Divide words containing *vowel plus r* digraphsDivide these words containing *vowel plus r* digraphs into syllables.

/or/ S S

or/gan/ic

fortunately

germinate

purchase

thirsty

gardener

enormous

familiar

purpose

forward

article

remark

## ▼ ACTIVITY ANSWERS

### 29: Vowel plus r

Answers will vary. Examples: car, warm, her, shirt, fork, work, fur

### 43: Divide words containing *vowel plus r* digraphs

/or/ S S  
or/gan/ic

/or/ U/L U L  
for/tu/nate/ly

/er/ S L  
ger/min/ate

/er/ U  
pur/chase

/er/ L  
thirst/y

/ar/ U U  
gar/den/er

L/U /or/ U  
e/norm/ous

U S L U  
fam/il/i/ar

/er/ U  
pur/pose

/or/ U  
for/ward

/ar/ U U  
ar/ti/cle

L/U /ar/  
re/mark