

Word Wonders Activity 14: Syllable Zoo

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Enjoy the rhythm and cadence of language, including the rhythm of multisyllabic words (18 to 24 months)
- Recognize, tap, and blend syllables (24 to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

In this activity, children will practice recognizing and blending syllables. Secondly, this activity offers children exposure to new vocabulary (animal names).

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *See You Later Alligator* by Sally Hopgood

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Shaker eggs, one per child
- 5 sticky notes or removable tabs

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- **Handout 1:** Syllable Zoo Images

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Have the shaker eggs in a basket nearby.
- Put a sticky note or tab on the two-page spread showing the:
 - Alligator
 - Raccoon
 - Bear
 - Bumblebee
 - Dog
 - Butterfly
 - Mouse
 - Cat
 - Anteater

- Jay
- Buttercup

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Print **Handout 1**. Decide how large a group you would like to have for this activity: 4-6 children are recommended. If 4 children play, choose 6 animal images; if 6 children play, choose 9 animal images. Choose an additional animal for the opening demonstration. Cut each animal image in half vertically. Write out the syllable parts on each half of the image. For example, for the *tiger* image, you would write TI on the left half of the image and GER on the right half. Keep the pairs together and put them in a folder or envelope where they are easy to access. Keep one pair separate for your demonstration.
- Make one copy of the zoo cage image for every animal you will use. Keep these close by in a folder.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Share the following book and extension activity with children as an opportunity to practice recognizing syllables.

Book: *See You Later Alligator* by Sally Hopgood

- **Introduce the book and its key ideas.** As you read the title of the book, encourage children to repeat "alligator". Notice aloud that it's a long word. Clap out the syllables: *al-li-ga-tor*. Have children take a guess about what this story will be about. Explain: *In this book, a tortoise, which is a kind of turtle, is getting ready to go on an adventure. Before he leaves, he says goodbye to all of his animal friends.*
- **Define new words and phrases.** *Too da loo* is a silly way of saying goodbye. *Scruffy* is another way of saying messy or not so neat and clean. *Timid* is shy.
- **Support phonological awareness.** Pause and clap out syllables of different words as you read. Have the children repeat and clap along. Include animal names that have multiple syllables (kan-ga-roo) and some with single syllables.
- **Use pictures and text to support observation and reasoning.** On the desert page, the turtle is wiping his face and there is some sweat. Ask children what they think the weather is like. How do they know? What clues are in the picture (the sun is shining)? On the "mow the lawn, unicorn" page ask, *what animal is this?* (A rhinoceros.) *Why do you think the turtle calls the rhino a unicorn?* (They both have a horn on their heads. You might have a picture of a unicorn available and talk about how unicorns are pretend animals, but rhinos are real animals that live in Africa and Asia.)
- **Make connections to children's lives.** Ask: *Have you ever seen any of these animals? Where? What did you see them do?* You can also ask: *Which of these animals would you like to see? Why?*

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

Explain the game: *In our story, we heard that every animal's name was made up of little beats. When we put those beats together, we get their name. Those little beats are called **syllables**. Let's say it together: **Syllables!** We are going to make syllable music today!*

Distribute a shaker egg to each child.

Introduce the game: *We are going to use these shaker eggs to tap out the syllables in the animals' names, and we'll make some syllable music. Are you ready to help? Let's try it!*

Model how to play: Go to the first marked page in the book and show children the illustration. Name the animal:

Alligator. Encourage children to repeat the name with you, if they can.

Emphasize the syllables: Read the word alligator (al-li-ga-tor) slowly and shake the shaker once for each syllable.

An alternative: As you say each animal's name, you can tap out the syllables on your body. Imagine you are saying the word *alligator*. Hold out your right arm and use your left hand to tap the syllables beginning at the wrist (*al*) – elbow (*li*) – shoulder (*ga*) – head (*tor*).

Repeat, this time encouraging children to join in with their shakers, having them shake once for each syllable as they chant the syllables in the animal names along with you.

Continue and repeat with the animal names on each marked page listed below. You may need to say the syllables slowly at first—that's okay!

- Alligator
- Raccoon
- Bear
- Bumblebee
- Dog
- Butterfly
- Mouse
- Cat
- Anteater
- Jay
- Buttercup

Summarize: *You all did such a great job making syllable music today! Tell me (or show me) what your favorite animal is, and we'll shake out its syllables!* Ask each child to share an animal. Repeat the name once and then prompt children to get ready. Repeat the name, slowly, as you shake for each syllable.

Collect the shakers before transitioning to the next activity.

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

Introduce: *Our story and our game making syllable music gave us lots of practice listening for the beats, or the syllables, that make words. Now we're going to meet some more animals and put them in our Syllable Zoo!*

Show: Place the zoo cage images on the floor in a row. Show them to the children and explain: *All of our zoo cages are empty! We need to put animals in our Syllable Zoo! Can you help?*

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

At the end of the activity, add a final step where children count the syllables in each animal's name.

To do this, give children small counters (like pom-poms or small blocks). As you say the syllables, model how to put a counter down for each syllable you say. For alligator, this would be 4 counters. Have children say the syllables with you and lay down their own counters. Then count together to discover how many syllables str in each word—from one in "bear" to three in "bumblebee."

You can also do syllable counting in next activity as well. Ask children to line up counters under each animal's picture and compare. What animal has the most counters (which means it has the most syllables)? What has the least counters (or the fewest syllables)?

For children 18 to 36 months old:

Gather children in a circle on the floor near the line of zoo cages.

Explain: *Look here! We need animals for our Syllable Zoo! We are going to find animals, say the beats of their name, and then blend their syllables until we know what animal it is! Ready?*

Demonstrate: Place the two halves of the panda about a foot apart in front of you on the floor, facing the children.

Say: *Pan (pause) ... Da*, as you point to each half of the picture. Say it again, prompting children to join: *Pan...Da*.

Optional: Using the shakers from the activity above, children can shake as you say the syllables.

Move the halves a bit closer to one another and repeat, slightly quicker: *Pan – Da*, as you point to each half. Say it again, prompting children to join in.

Move the halves so they are touching and forming the image of a panda. Blend the syllables so they make the name: *Panda...Panda*. Prompt children to join you in repeating *Panda*.

Observe: *Our first animal is a panda!*

Choose a child to place the panda images together in the first cage.

Repeat: Continue the game with each of the remaining animals:

1. Panda
2. Giraffe
3. Turtle
4. Lion
5. Zebra
6. Penguin
7. Dolphin
8. Tiger
9. Hippo
10. Monkey

Close by taking a walk along the zoo cages, having children clap/shake out the syllables as you say each animal's name.

For children 36 to 48 months old:

Gather children in a circle on the floor near the line of zoo cages.

Explain: *We are going to play a game to fill up our Syllable Zoo. I am going to give you one-half of an animal. You have to find your animal partner. We'll say the beats of your animal and then blend their syllables until we know what animal it is! Ready?*

Distribute: Distribute one-half of each picture to each child so there are matching partners for the game. Ask children to hold their animals facing forward so their friends can see what picture they're holding.

Play the Game:

Say: *Each of you is holding part of an animal that belongs in our zoo. Look around and find the other half of your animal. Do you think you can do it? Let's try!*

Observe: Watch children work to find their matching half. If they are having difficulty, suggest they look for peers holding animals with the same color or type of body as in their picture. When children have paired up, move to the next part of the game.

Say the Syllables: Start with one pair of children. Ask them to take two big steps away from one another. Say: *I see you are holding a very special animal. It is a **Gi** (point to the first half of the animal), **Raffe** (point to the second half of the animal). Let's say it together: **Gi** (pause) **Raffe**.*

Get a bit closer: Ask children to take one step closer. Repeat the syllables, this time a bit faster: **Gi-Raffe, Gi-Raffe**. You say it with me: **"Gi-Raffe!"**

Stand side-by-side: Ask children to stand next to each other, holding their pictures together. Blend the syllables so they make the word: **Giraffe, Giraffe**. You say it with me: **Giraffe!** The first animal in our zoo is a (pause for children to fill in): **Giraffe!**

Ask the pair of children to put their halves in a zoo cage.

Repeat with the remaining pairs of children.

Close by taking a walk along the zoo cages, having children say the names of the different animals and clap out the syllables of each animal's name.

REFLECT

Return to a gathering area with the children. To close the activity:

Observe that everyone's name has syllables we can tap out.

Model how to tap out the syllables of your own name. Invite children to join in after you do it once.

Repeat for each child's name.

SUMMARIZE: *Today, we learned to listen for and tap out syllables. Syllables are the little parts that make a word. When we blend those syllables together, we know what word it is!*

INDIVIDUALIZING THE ACTIVITY

Make it more challenging:

- In Activity 1, you can differentiate by choosing animals with more syllables (like *armadillo*) for children who are becoming more confident with recognizing syllables.
- In Activity 1, after completing several repetitions of the syllable activity, focus on rhyming during reads of *See You Later Alligator*. Tell the children: *Every page in this story has a rhyming pair, those are two words that sound the same at the end.* Emphasize these sounds as you read. As you read pause and notice aloud: *I hear a rhyme on this page: **later** and **alligator** rhyme because they sound the same at the end! Your turn, say **later, alligator**. These words...* (pause to see if children will say "rhyme." If they don't, you can start the word by prompting "Rrrrr..." or simply saying, "They rhyme!"). After reading the book several times, pause to see whether children can complete the rhyming pairs.
- In Activity 2 (syllable zoo), you can print out pictures of animals that have more syllables in their names (like kangaroo or armadillo) and cut the pictures into the correct number of syllables. This makes it more challenging for children to find all of their partners *and* makes the blending process more challenging too.
- Do a second version of the game using children's names and photos, with the photo cut into the appropriate number of pieces/syllables.

Make it less challenging:

- Provide a verbal model of saying the syllables, then repeat, and then prompt children to join in as you say the syllables. Use 2-syllable words and provide lots of repetition. Young toddlers may not yet be able to recognize syllables consistently, so this activity is more about exposing them to the concept without expecting mastery.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Play the syllable game using their names, food items, and/or the names of objects in the classroom. Say the syllables slowly while clapping or tapping your hands, then prompt children to join in, repeating syllables until you've made the word.
- Play a fill-in-the-syllable game during daily routines. For example, you might say: *You fill in the syllable. For lunch today, we have spaghet... Yes! "**Spaghetti!**" Or, "Do you need help with your zip... Yes, your "**zipper!**" Do you need help with your zipper?"*
- Make the Syllable Zoo game available as a choice for free play time.

Song: Syllable Zoo

Hey everyone, it's the syllable zoo! (Wave to everyone)

We're so glad you're here, and your good friends too.

It's a special zoo, and the animals here

Are grouped by the number of syllables you hear. (Point to ear – "listen")

The houses here are fillable

By counting animal syllables! – Let's count!

In House Number 1 it's really fab!

There's a shark, a sloth, a whale, and a crab!

("Count" with fingers 1-2-3-4)

Zoo House 1 is fillable;

Just listen for one syllable! – Let's clap!

Shark – – – ("Shark"/clap)

(Clap once after each animal's name is spoken)

Sloth – – – ("Sloth"/clap)

Whale – – – – ("Whale"/clap)

Crab – – – ("Crab"/clap)

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In House Number 2 it gets really funky!

There's an aardvark, peacock, lobster, and a monkey!

("Count" with fingers 1-2-3-4)

Zoo House 2 is fillable;

Just listen for two syllables! – Let's clap!

Aardvark – – ("Aardvark"/clap clap)

(Clap twice after each animal's name is spoken)

Peacock – – ("Peacock"/clap clap)

Lobster – – ("Lobster"/clap clap)

Monkey – – ("Monkey"/clap clap)

House Number 3 is magnificent!

With crocodile, antelope, octopus, elephant

("Count" with fingers 1-2-3-4)

Zoo House 3 is fillable;

Just listen for three syllables! – Let's clap!

Crocodile – – – ("Crocodile"/clap clap clap)

(Clap three times after each animal's name is spoken)

Antelope – – – ("Antelope"/clap clap clap)

Octopus – – – ("Octopus"/clap clap clap)

Elephant – – – ("Elephant"/clap clap clap)

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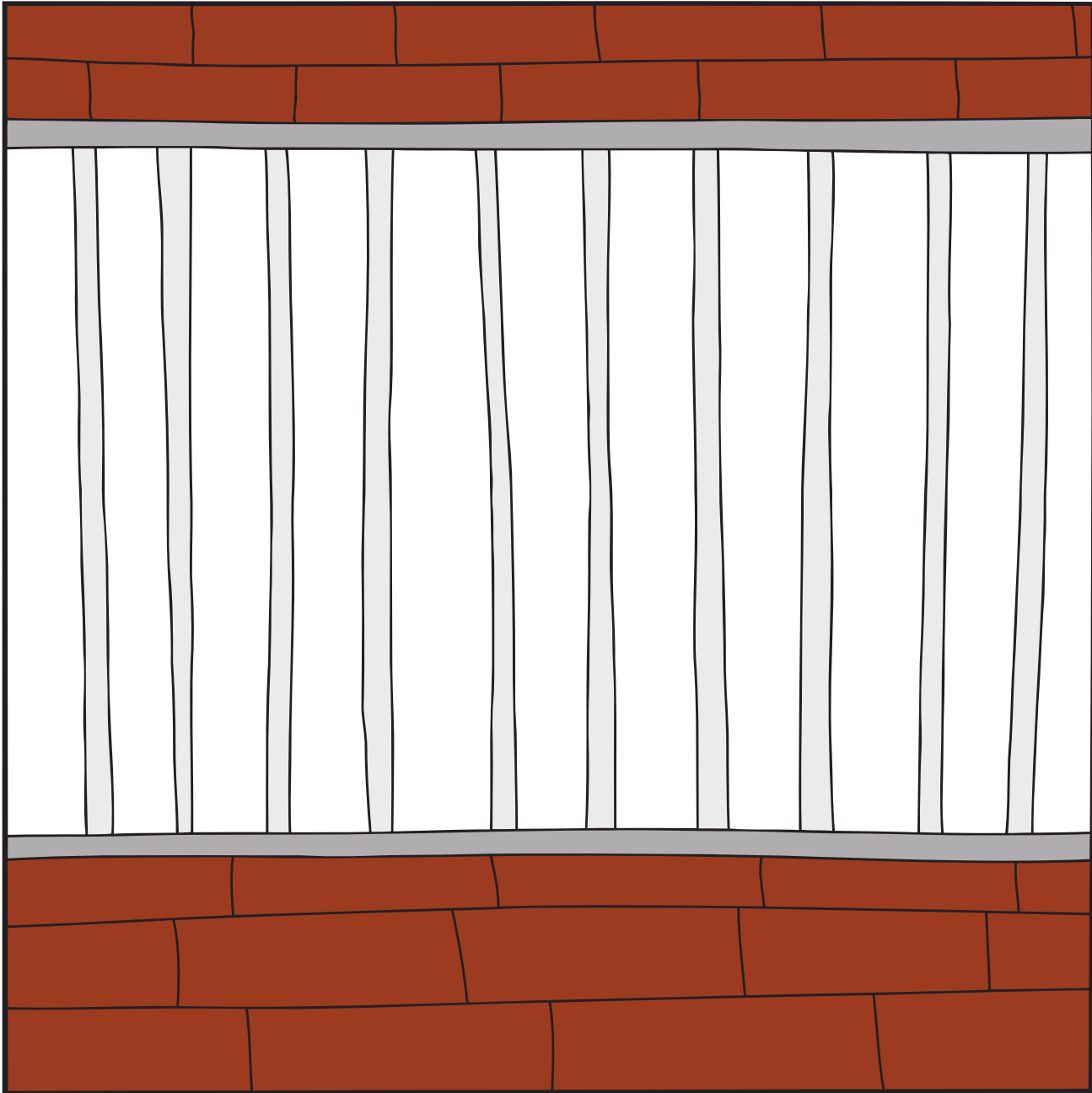
Zoo houses here are fillable

Just listen for the number of syllables!

(Point to ear – "listen")

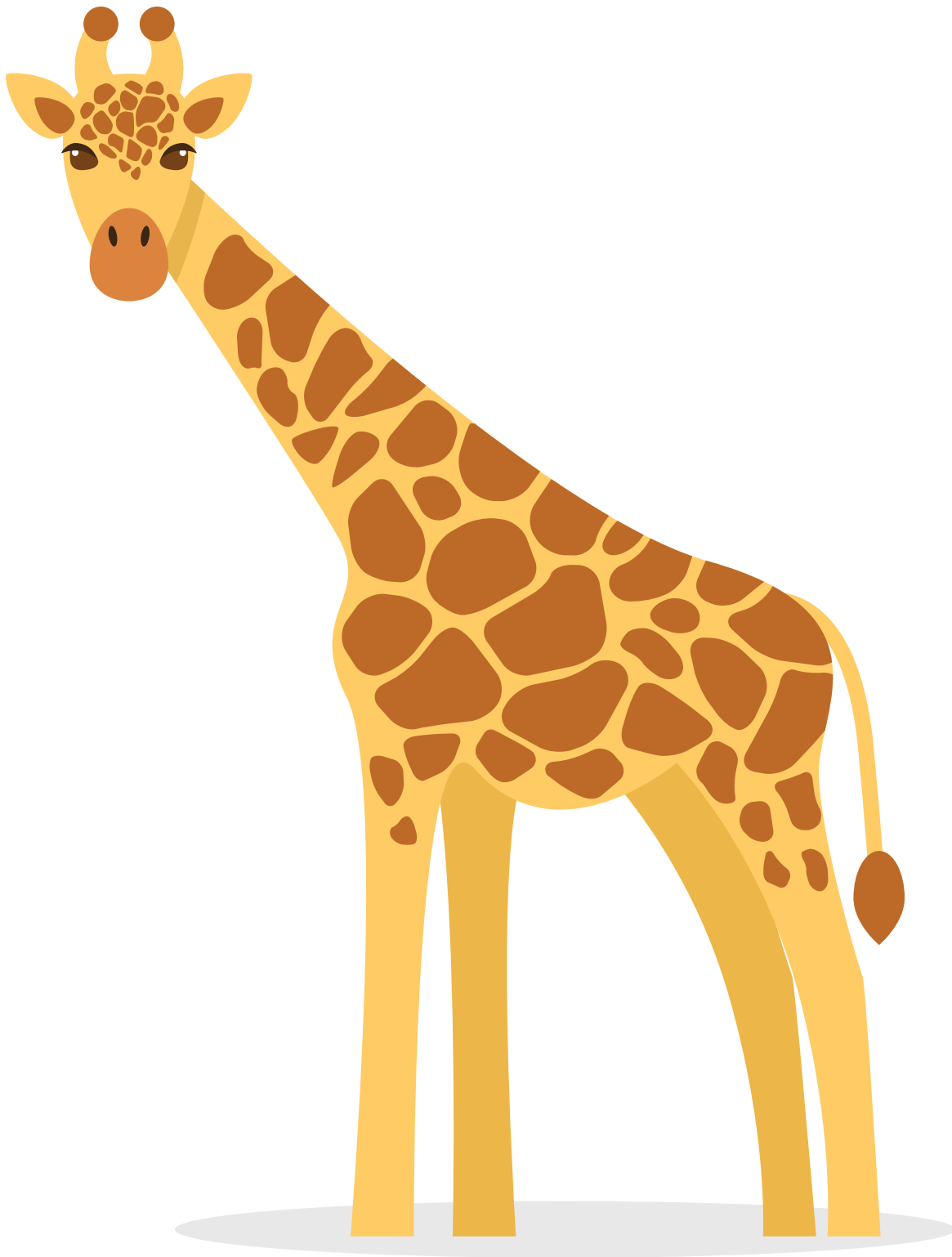
Hippopotamus!!! (sigh...) "Aw man!"

Handout 1: Syllable Zoo

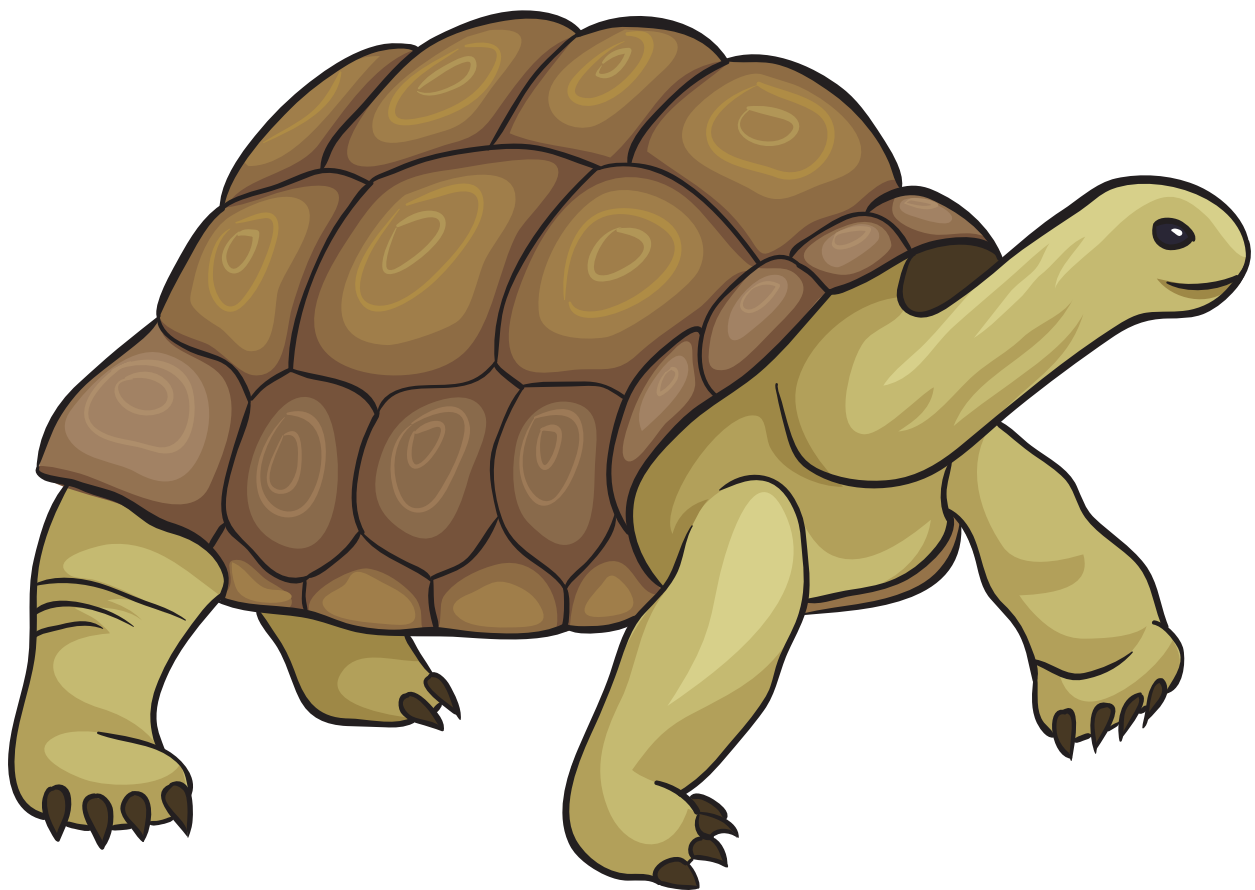




Panda—Pan-da



Giraffe—Gi-raffe



Turtle—Tur-tle



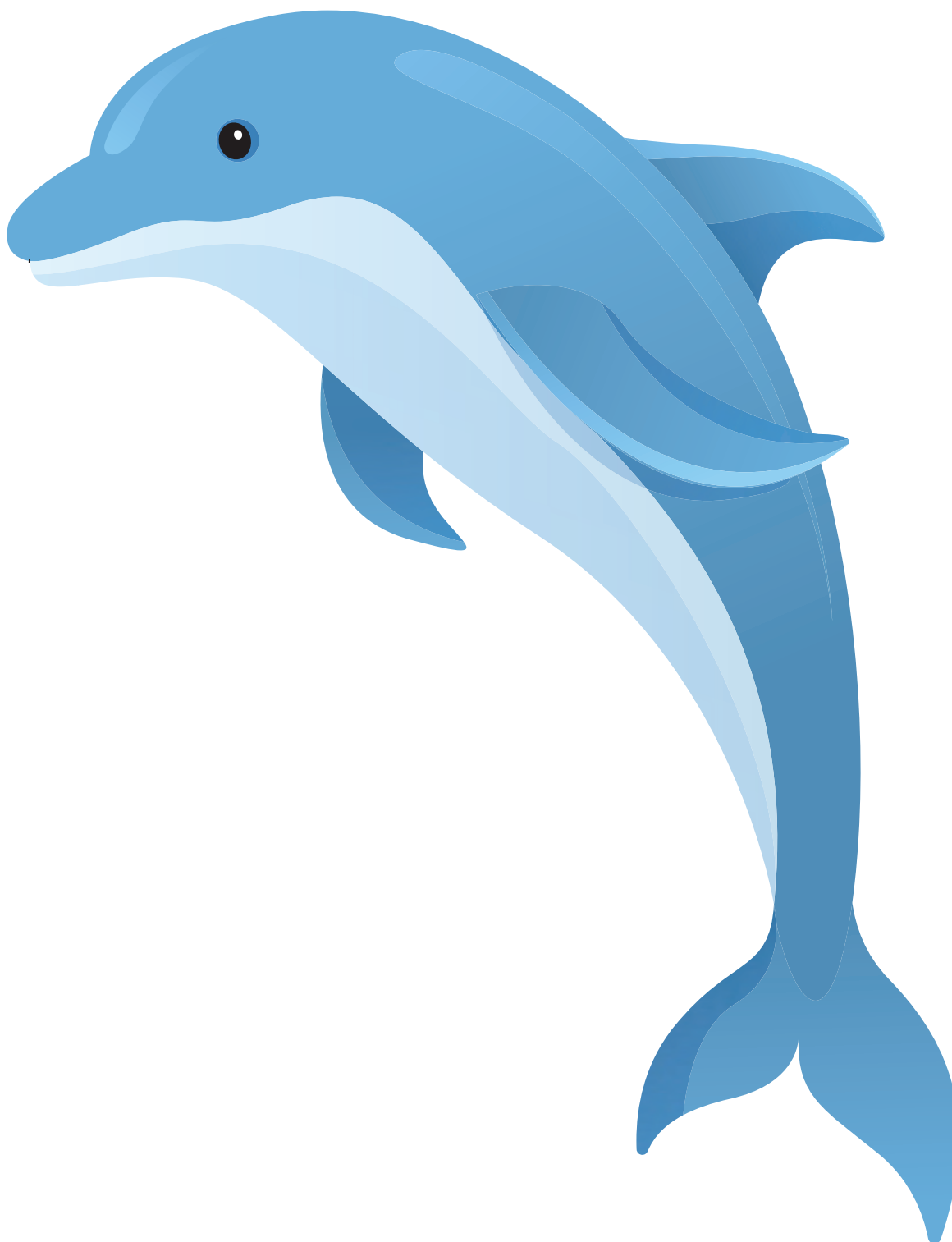
Lion—Li-on



Zebra—Ze-bra



Penguin—Pen-guin

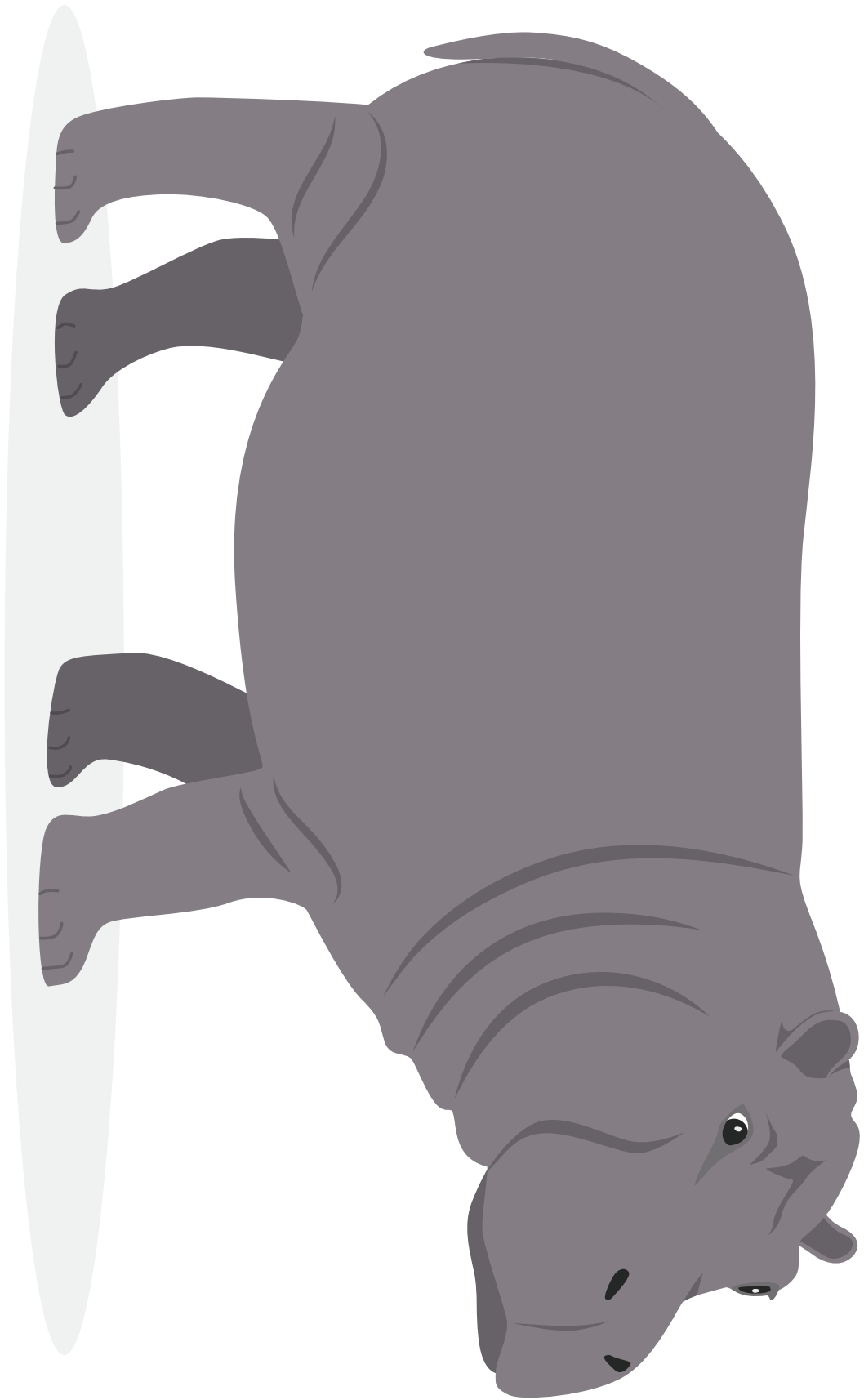


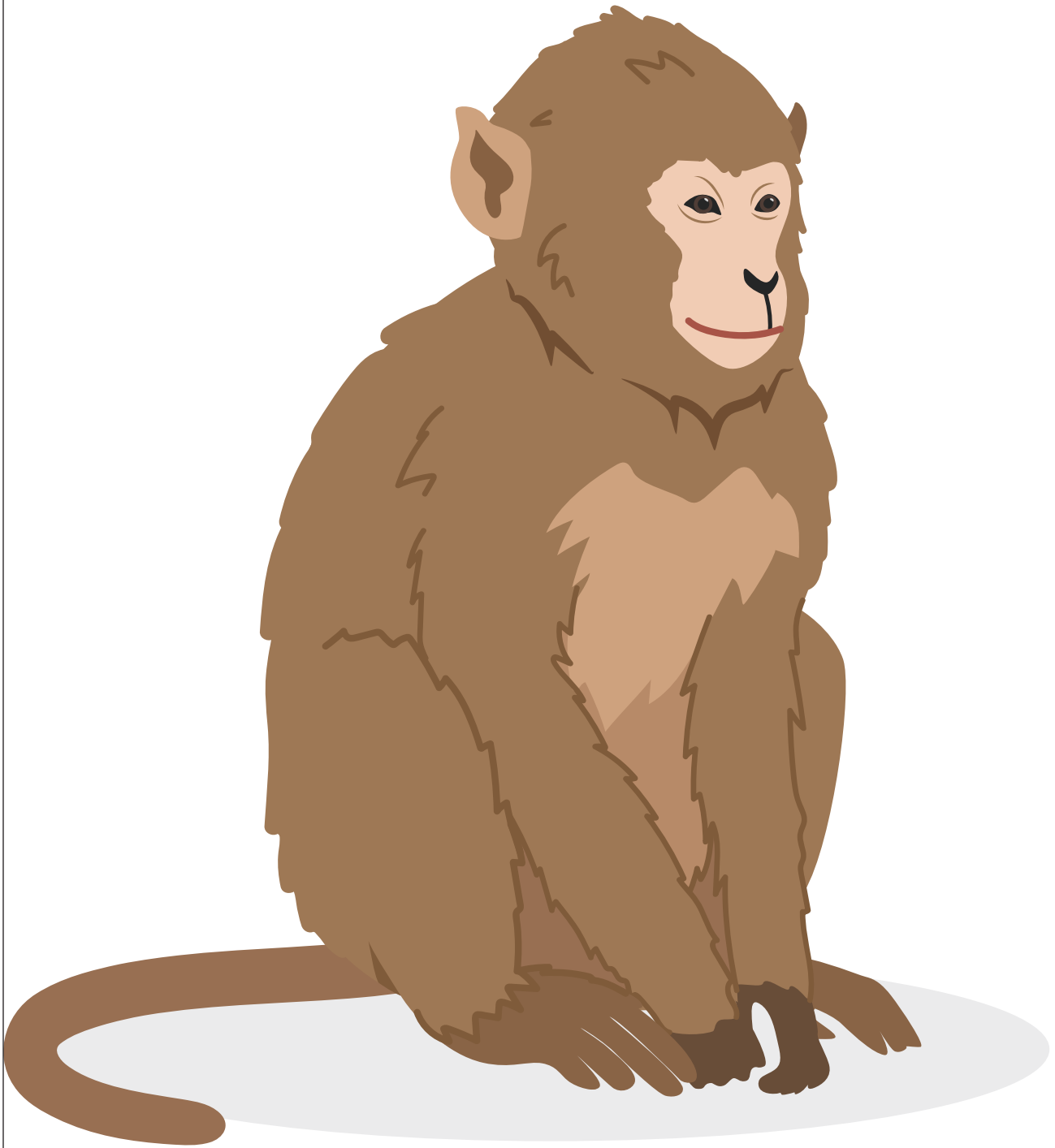
Dolphin—Dol-phin



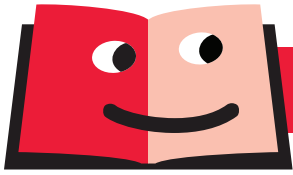
Tiger—Ti-ger

Hippo—Hip-po





Monkey—Mon-key



So Many Syllables!

This week, children practiced listening for and tapping syllables. It doesn't matter which language you speak, you can help your child learn to recognize syllables, or the sounds that make up words.

When you're at the supermarket with your child, talk about what you are buying. Name the object and then together, clap for each syllable you hear. For example:

tomato → to – ma – to (3)

broccoli → broc – co – li (3)

oatmeal → oat – meal (2)

cookies → cook – ies (2)

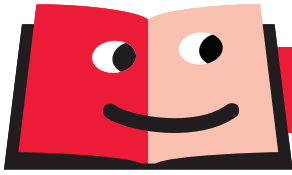
cheese → cheese (1)

hamburger → ham – bur – ger (3)



Then let your child take the lead! Ask them to show you an item on the shelf and clap out the syllables for you.

Simple games like this turn a shopping trip into a learning adventure!



Solo para familias

¡Tantas sílabas!

Esta semana, los niños han practicado la escucha de sílabas. No importa cuál sea el idioma que usted hable, puede ayudar a su hijo a aprender a reconocer las sílabas, es decir, los sonidos que forman las palabras.

Cuando vaya al supermercado con su hijo, hable de lo que van a comprar. Nombren el objeto y, después, aplaudan juntos por cada sílaba que oigan. Por ejemplo:

tomate → to – ma – te (3)

brócoli → bró – co – li (3)

avena → a – ve – na (3)

galletas → ga – lle – tas (3)

queso → que – so (2)

tortilla → tor – ti – lla (3)



A continuación, deje que su hijo tome la iniciativa. Pídale que le muestre cualquier producto que vea y que pronuncie las sílabas, acompañándolas de una palmada.

Con juegos tan sencillos como este, ir de compras se convierte en una aventura de aprendizaje.