

Word Wonders Activity 15: Dig Into Syllables

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Enjoy activities that emphasize the rhythm of spoken language and the structure of words (18 to 30 months)
- Develop receptive and expressive vocabulary (here, related to vehicles of various types) (18 to 48 months)
- Recognize and blend syllables into words (30 months to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

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

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *Little Excavator* by Steve Webb

For Activity 1 (Engage):

Handout 1: Vehicles

- Manila folders, glue/stapler
- Laminator, if available (optional)

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Ambulance toy
- Baby doll
- Dinosaur toy
- Crayon
- Fry-pan toy
- Napkin
- Telephone toy
- Fire-truck toy
- Bag that can hold the objects above

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Print two copies of **Handout 1**. Set one copy of the vehicle pictures aside.

- Using the other set of copies, make vehicle puzzles. Glue each image to half of a manila folder or cardboard to make them sturdier (children will be hopping or stepping on these images). Cut each image vertically into its number of syllables (so that when you line up the pieces, it forms the vehicle and the vehicle name.) Write the letters of each syllable on each puzzle part:
 - Excavator:** Cut into 5 pieces, pieces labeled Ex-ca-va-tor
 - Bulldozer:** Cut into 3 pieces, pieces labeled Bull-do-zer
 - Dump Truck:** Cut into 2 pieces, pieces labeled Dump-truck
 - Roller:** Cut into 2 pieces, pieces labeled Rol-ler
 - Crane:** Uncut, piece labeled Crane
- Optional: If available, laminate the puzzle pieces for sturdiness and re-use.
- Clip the pieces for each puzzle together, along with its picture. Place each of the vehicle puzzles into its own recloseable bag or folder and set aside until needed.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Place all objects in the bag. Set aside until needed.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

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

Book: *Little Excavator* by Steve Webb

As You Read:

- Introduce the book and its key ideas.** As you read the title of the book (*Little Excavator*), encourage children to say that vehicle name with you: *excavator*. Notice that it's a long word. Clap out the syllables: *ex-ca-va-tor*. Have children take a guess about what this story will be about. Ask what job they think the little excavator does. Explain that an excavator is sometimes called a "digger" because it helps construction workers dig big holes.
- Define new words and phrases.** We see that the Little Excavator is in a "jam." *Sometimes jam is something we eat with toast. But a "jam" can also mean that we have a problem or we need help, just like the little excavator that tipped over.* Ask children: *Have you ever been in a jam, when you needed help from a friend or a grown-up?*
- Prompt children to repeat key phrases and pause for children to fill-in-the-blank.** On the first two-page spread, point to the words that say BEEP, BEEP, BEEP. Encourage children to join in. On subsequent reads, pause and point to those words and see if children can say them. On the last page, point to the thick red text that says GO, GO, GO and prompt children to join in and say these words with you. On subsequent reads, simply point to this text and wait to see if children will chant along.

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

When we see the Little Excavator next to the dump truck, have children decide which vehicle is *bigger* and which is *smaller*. Explore another comparison between the dump truck and the crane: who is bigger now? Who is smaller?

The crane lifts things up high in the sky (show children the big text that says HIGH). Model how the children can hold their arms out like the arm of the crane. Then repeat the words from the book: "High, high, high" as you raise your arm up to the sky and pretend to be a crane. Then prompt the children to move their load "low, low, low."

Introducing language for size comparisons (bigger/smaller) and for spatial positions (high/low) helps children build a math vocabulary.

- **Use pictures and text to support observation and reasoning.** The loader's job is to lift up and move large and heavy things. In the story, the loader is putting garbage in the dump truck. Ask children to find the shovel on the loader. The shovel helps the loader scoop up all the garbage. When the loader goes "SMASH SMASH SMASH," have children clap their hands as you point to these words in big green text.
- **Identify and explore emotions.** Oh no! Little Excavator fell over with a "clunk." What do the children think the Little Excavator is feeling right now? When the crane tells the Little Excavator that he's too small, how do you think he's feeling? There is one job that the Little Excavator is the perfect size to do...what is it? (*Drive across the bridge to plant an apple tree.*) What do you think the Little Excavator is feeling now?
- **Make connections to children's lives.** Have the children seen any of these construction trucks? Where? What can they tell you about construction vehicles in their community?

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

Introduce the activity: *In our story, we met so many different vehicles—like an excavator, a dump truck, a crane, a bulldozer, and a loader. Now we're going to look at some pictures of construction vehicles and listen for the little beats in their names. Those little beats are called **syllables**. We are going to clap out the syllables in their names today!*

Show children each vehicle picture from **Handout 1**.

- Ask children if they know the name of this vehicle.
- Name the vehicle, for example: *This is a dump truck.*
- Prompt children to repeat the vehicle name: *Let's all say it—Dump Truck.*
- Clap out the syllables: *Dump (clap) Truck (clap)*
- Prompt children to clap with you: *Let's clap out the syllables together—Dump (clap) Truck (clap).*
- Repeat 1-2 more times.

Continue with each of the vehicles (ex-ca-va-tor, bull-do-zer, crane, and rol-ler).

Optional: Provide children with shakers, bells, or small drums where they can tap out the syllables instead of clapping. They can also tap their thighs instead of clapping. You can mix it up to keep them engaged.

Optional: You can choose a "Syllable Leader" for each vehicle. The Leader will stand in front and lead the group in tapping out syllables for "their" vehicle. You can select children based on their developmental readiness (for example, select children for longer vehicle names who are closer to mastering the ability to distinguish syllables. For children new to this skill, select one-syllable vehicle names.)

For Children Aged 30 to 48 Months Old

Introduce the syllable puzzles: *Now let's explore the syllables of our vehicles in a different way. I have some puzzles that I made—each piece has one syllable. If we put the syllables together, we can find out what vehicle word we make! Ready? Let's go!*

Model how to play:

- **Choose one of the puzzles. Place the pieces of the puzzle in a row** on the floor where children can see them. Ensure the pieces have about 12 inches between them.
- **Ask children:** *Do you remember the name of this vehicle? What is it?* (Remind children of its name if needed.)
- **Prompt children to repeat** the vehicle name: *Now let's say it all together: Dump Truck!*

- **Ask children to stand:** *Now let's stomp out the syllables. Can you stomp like a dinosaur? Let's stomp out: DUMP. TRUCK.* (Model stomping on the ground for each syllable.)
- **Prompt children to get ready** to hop out the syllables: Model how you hop on each puzzle piece as you say: dump/truck or bull/do/zer.
- **Give each child a turn** to hop on the syllables as they say the word.
- ****For children who are not yet hopping or talking much, they can step on each puzzle piece as you say the syllables for the vehicle names.**
- **Wrap-up** by pushing the puzzle pieces together. Say the syllables of the word more quickly as the pieces get closer together until you finally say the whole word: *Dump truck.*

Continue and repeat with each of the vehicles: Bulldozer, Excavator, Dump Truck, Roller, Crane.

Summarize: *We had a lot of fun stomping out our vehicles' syllables today! Tell me what your favorite vehicle is, and we'll stomp it out one last time!*

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Help children explore the *quantity* of syllables in each vehicle's name.

After children have hopped on the puzzle pieces for each vehicle, choose one vehicle to start. Place a cube block on each piece that forms the bulldozer (for example). With children, you can count out loud how many syllables (blocks) that vehicle's name has.

Repeat for each vehicle. Leave the blocks on the puzzle pieces so children can compare the words at the end. Which vehicle has the *most* syllables (excavator)? Which vehicle has the *least* syllables (crane)?

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

For children 18 to 30 months old:

Introduce: *Now we're going to play a game called What's in My Bag! We'll be listening to the beats or syllables that make up different words. Let's try it!*

Show: Hold up the bag so children can see it.

Explain: *I have some surprises in my bag. I'm going to choose something from my bag and say its name in a special way. See if you can guess what I have in my hand!*

Select the baby from the bag (keeping it hidden). Segment the name of the object into syllables separated by one-second pauses: *Ba-by.*

Prompt children to say it with you, if they can: *"Ba-by. Ba-by".* If children are not yet talking, they can clap out the syllables as you say them.

Explain: *Now, let's put the syllables together into a word. Let's say it together: Baby. Baby. Do you think I have a baby in my bag? Let's see if we're right...* (Continue saying "Ba-by" as you make the baby peek out of the bag.)

Show children the baby as you take it out of the bag: *It IS a baby. A baby loves to be cuddled. Let's say baby together: "Baby!"*

Prompt children to clap out the syllables with you one more time: *Baby sounds like: Ba-by. Clap with me: Ba-by.*

Continue with the remaining objects:

- Di-no-saur
- Cray-on

- Fry-pan
- Nap-kin
- Te-le-phone
- Fi-r(e)-truck
- Am-bu-lance

For children 30 to 48 months old:

Introduce: Now we're going to play a game called *What's in My Bag!* We'll be listening to the beats or syllables that make up different words. Let's try it!

Show: Hold up the bag so children can see it.

Explain: I have some surprises in my bag. I'm going to choose one thing in my bag and say its name in a special way. See if you can guess what I have in my hand!

Select the ambulance from the bag (keeping it hidden). Segment the name of the object into syllables separated by one-second pauses: *Am-bu-lance*.

Prompt children to say it with you: *Am-bu-lance. Am-bu-lance. Does anyone know what I'm holding in my hand?*

Explain: Now, let's put the syllables together into a word. Let's say it together (blend the syllables slowly at first and then faster): *Am...bu...lance. Ambulance. What do you think is in my bag?* (Take children's ideas.) Let's see if we're right...

Show children the ambulance as you take it out of the bag: *Yes! It's an ambulance. An ambulance takes sick people to the hospital. Let's say **ambulance** together: Ambulance!*

Prompt children to clap out the syllables with you one more time: *Ambulance sounds like: Am – bu – lance. Clap with me: Am – bu – lance.*

Explain that next, the children will fill in the syllable that you don't say: *Okay, now I'm going to need your help. We'll say "ambulance" again, but this time, I'll point to you when it's your turn to fill in the syllable. Let's try it!*

- **First, say:** Am – bu – (pause and point). Wait to see if children fill in the final syllable. If they don't, you can give them a hint by saying the first sound (/I/).
- **Next,** pause for the middle syllable: Am—(pause and point)–lance.
- **Finally,** pause for the first syllable: (Pause and point) – bu – lance.

Continue going through the activity sequence (selecting items from the bag, saying their syllables, etc.) with the remaining objects:

- Ba-by
- Di-no-saur
- Cray-on
- Fry-pan
- Nap-kin
- Te-le-phone
- Fi-r(e)-truck

REFLECT

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

Observe that every word is made of syllables.

Ask each child to tell/show the group a toy they like to play with. If needed, you can provide an example first.

Model how to tap out the name of each child's favorite toy into syllables. Encourage the group to join in after you model.

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

INDIVIDUALIZING THE ACTIVITY

Make it more challenging:

- In Activity 1, you can differentiate by choosing vehicles with more syllables for children who are becoming more confident with recognizing syllables.
- In Activity 1, you can add different vehicles to the game that provide more challenge in terms of syllables—like *cherry-picker*, *tractor*, *concrete mixer*, *forklift*, *car transporter*, *taxi-cab*.
- In Activity 2, you can give each child a bag and ask them to choose an item in the classroom that fits inside. They can then lead the activity (with support/scaffolding from you, if needed) by saying the syllables of the object they chose.
- In Activity 2, you can create separate bags of items so children can work in pairs to play the game, after you model the activity .
- In both activities, have children sort the images/objects by how many syllables they have (1, 2, 3, or 4). They will need your help with this.

Make it less challenging:

- For both activities, focus on one and two syllable words and omit the others.
- For Activity 1, omit the blending activity.
- For Activity 2, choose objects that are familiar to children/objects they can already label.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Make the syllable puzzle pieces available for free play. You might also make another copy of the vehicle pictures, glue to cardboard, and cut into traditional puzzle pieces to extend this activity into math play. Three- to four-year-olds can generally master an 8-piece puzzle. Two-year-olds can typically complete a 3-4 piece puzzle.
- At mealtime or while waiting in line to go outside, play the syllable game by using their names. Say: *I'm thinking of someone whose name sounds like: Kim-ber-ly. Who am I thinking about?* Say the syllables slowly while clapping or tapping your hands, then prompt children to join in, repeating syllables and blending them until you've said the child's name.
- Play a fill-in-the-syllable game during daily routines. For example, you might say: *Can you fill in the syllable? It's time for us to go to the play... Yes! "Playground!" It's time to go to the playground!* Or *"Do you need help with your zip... Yes, your "zipper!" Do you need help with your zipper?*

- Blend syllables outside by having children each hold a puzzle piece from Activity 1. They should stand a few feet from one another. Each child says “their” syllable, like “bull” for “bulldozer.” They can then move one step closer to one another, repeating their syllable, until they say the whole word: “bulldozer.”
- Have a “syllable snack time” where you tap out or clap out the syllables in your different snacks: crack-ers, ap – ple – sauce, ba-na-na, cook-ie.

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)

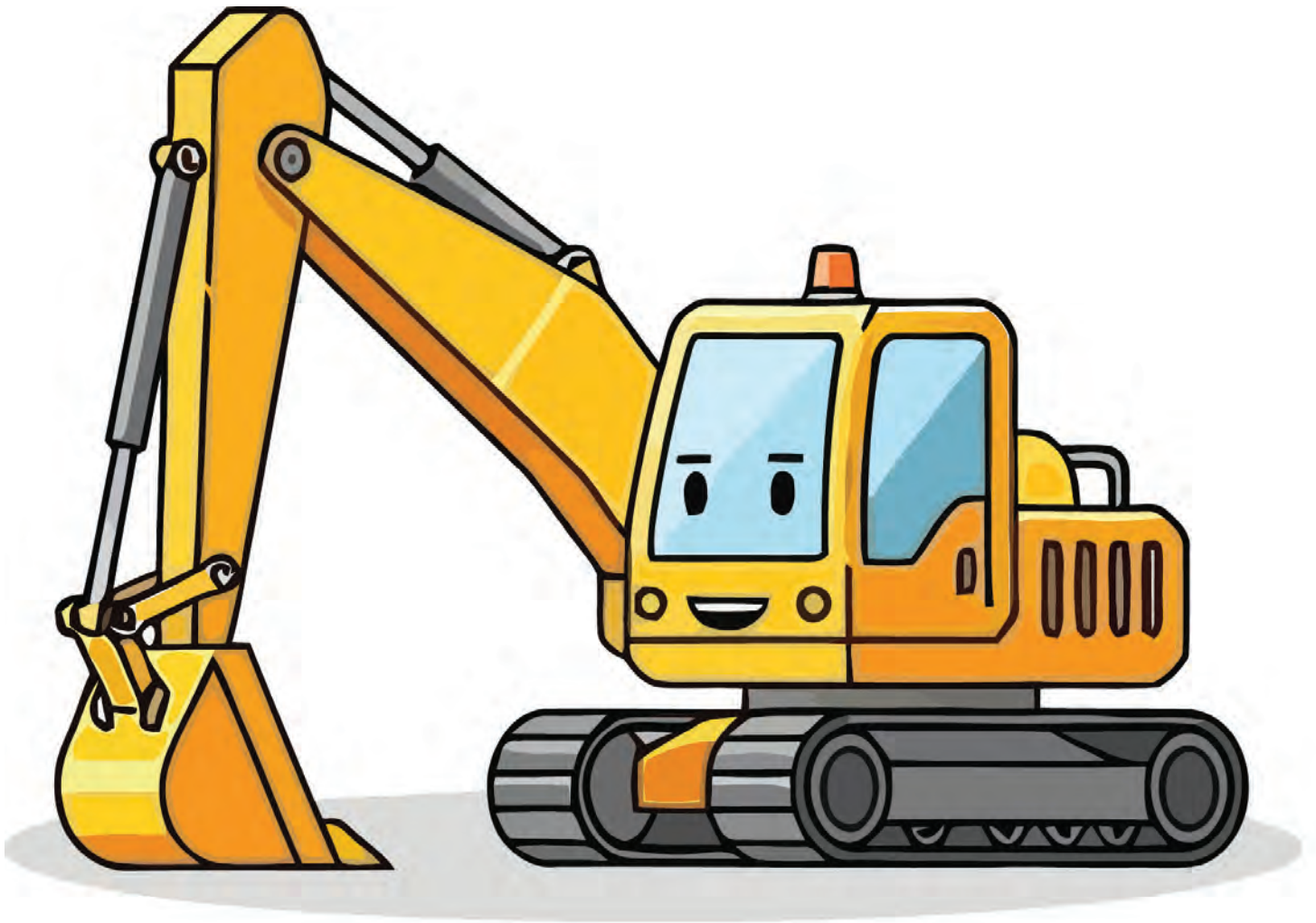
House Number 3 is magnificent!
 With crocodile, antelope, octopus, elephant (“Count” with fingers 1-2-3-4)
 Zoo House 3 is fillable;
 Just listen for three syllables! – Let's clap!

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: Vehicles: Excavator, Bulldozer, Dump Truck, Crane and Roller

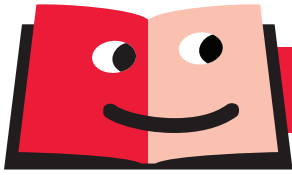












Syllables in the World

This week, children practiced listening for syllables in words. Learning to hear syllables is an early literacy skill that, later, will help children learn to decode words they read, spell, and write.

During some of your child's daily routines, choose familiar objects and say/clap their syllables. Encourage your child to join in and guess what word you are saying.

Bath-time: Try clapping out the syllables as you say words like:

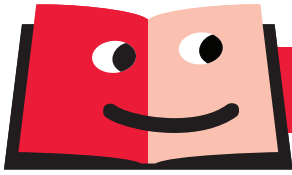
- soap
- shampoo (sham-poo)
- washcloth (wash-cloth)
- towel (tow-el)

Meal-time: Try clapping out the syllables as you say words like:

- plate
- ketchup (ketch-up)
- salad (sal-ad)
- macaroni (mac-a-roni)
- pizza (pi-zza)
- quesadilla (que-sa-di-lla)
- watermelon (wa-ter-mel-on)
- napkin (nap-kin)



Simple games like this give children practice with hearing and repeating the syllables of the words in their world!



Solo para familias

Sílabas en el mundo

Esta semana, los niños practicaron la escucha de sílabas. Aprender a oír las sílabas es una destreza de lectura temprana que, más adelante, ayudará a los niños a aprender cómo descifrar las palabras que leen, deletrean y escriben.

Durante algunas de las rutinas diarias de su niño, elija objetos conocidos y diga o aplauda sus sílabas. Anime a su hijo a que participe y adivine qué palabras está usted diciendo.

Hora del baño: Pruebe aplaudiendo las sílabas mientras dice palabras como:

- jabón
- champú (cham-pú)
- toallita (to-a-llita)
- Toalla (to-a-lla)

Hora de la comida: Pruebe aplaudiendo las sílabas mientras dice palabras como:

- plato
- salsa de tomate (sal-sa-de-to-ma-te)
- ensalada (en-sa-la-da)
- macarrón (ma-ca-rrón)
- Pizza (pi-zza)
- Quesadilla (que-sa-di-lla)
- sandía (san-día)
- servilleta (ser-vi-lle-ta)



¡Juegos sencillos como estos sirven para que el niño practique oyendo y repitiendo las sílabas de palabras que se encuentran en su mundo!