ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Segmenting sounds

Difficulty level: Easy

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how a young reader learns to spell a word, by splitting it into its separate sounds and writing a letter for each one they hear. A child sounding out cat hears three separate sounds and writes a letter for each one. A teacher helping a struggling reader slows a word down sound by sound until the child can hear each part. Knowing how to segment sounds tells you how spoken words break into pieces, which is the first step to spelling them and reading them back.



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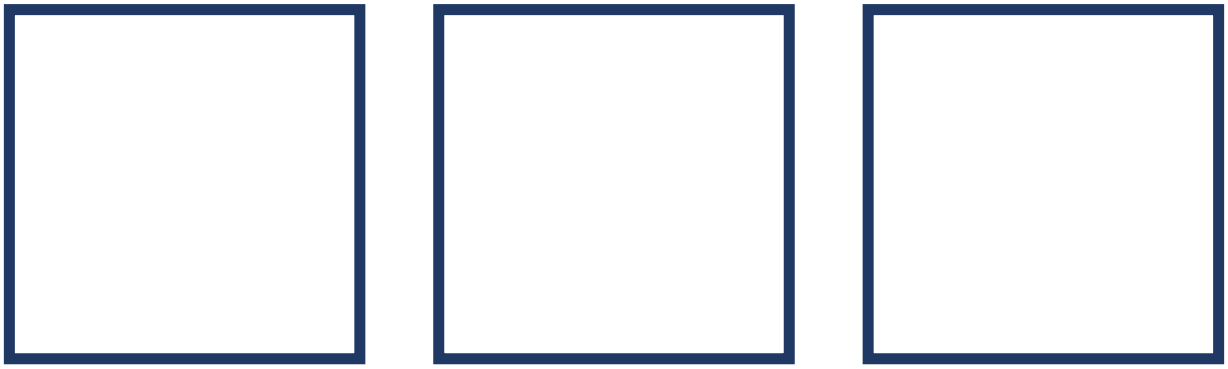
Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q How many sounds are in the word 'cat', and what are they?

cat



SOLUTION

Say the word slowly: cat.

Listen for each sound in order: kuh, ah, tuh.

So 'cat' splits into kuh, ah, tuh (3 sounds).

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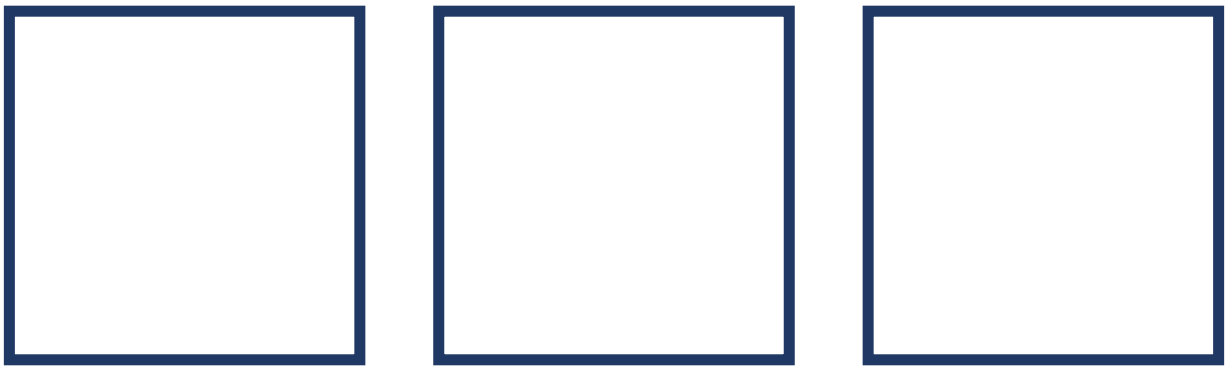
EXAMPLE 2

Q How many sounds are in the word 'sun', and what are they?

sun



SOLUTION

Say the word slowly: sun.

Listen for each sound in order: sss, uh, nnn.

So 'sun' splits into sss, uh, nnn (3 sounds).

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Practice questions

1 Segment 'dog' into sounds. How many sounds are there?

- **A** 3 sounds: duh, oh, guh
- **B** 2 sounds: duh, og
- **C** 3 sounds: duh, ah, guh
- **D** 4 sounds: duh, oh, guh, uh

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2 Segment 'pin' into sounds. List the sounds.

- **A** puh, ih, nnn
- **B** puh, ih, mmm
- **C** puh, ah, nnn
- **D** puh, ih

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3 Segment 'map' into sounds. What is the first sound?

- A mmm
- B ah
- C puh
- D ap

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4 Segment 'hen' into sounds. What is the last sound?

- A nnn
- B huh
- C eh
- D en

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5 Segment 'cup' into sounds. What is the middle sound?

- **A** uh
- **B** kuh
- **C** puh
- **D** up

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6 Blend these sounds: puh, ih, guh. What word do you get?

- **A** pig
- **B** pin
- **C** big
- **D** peg

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7 Segment 'stop' into sounds. How many sounds are there?

- **A** 4 sounds: sss, tuh, oh, puh
- **B** 3 sounds: sss, tuh, op
- **C** 4 sounds: sss, tuh, uh, puh
- **D** 5 sounds: sss, tuh, oh, puh, uh

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8 Segment 'ship' into sounds. How many sounds are there?

- **A** 3 sounds: shh, ih, puh
- **B** 4 sounds: sss, huh, ih, puh
- **C** 3 sounds: shh, ah, puh
- **D** 2 sounds: shh, ip

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9

Which word has only 2 sounds?

A go: guh, oh

B dog: duh, oh, guh

C pin: puh, ih, nnn

D map: mmm, ah, puh

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10

Change the first sound in 'jam' to 'huh'. What new word do you get?

A ham

B jam

C huh

D jan

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ANSWER KEY

1. 3 sounds: duh, oh, guh

2. puh, ih, nnn

3. mmm

4. nnn

5. uh

6. pig

7. 4 sounds: sss, tuh, oh, puh

8. 3 sounds: shh, ih, puh

9. go: guh, oh

10. ham

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