

Lesson Plan for Schwa (Second Syllable in Two-Syllable Word)

Phonics Pattern for Focus: Schwa

OPEN WITH A LISTENING GAME: Warm up with a phonological awareness activity to get students identifying syllables.

Teacher says the word and has students separate the syllables.

about (a bout)	civil (civ il)
stencil (sten cil)	trumpet (trum pet)

Materials Needed:

- ☐ set of letter flash cards without pictures
- ☐ syllable-type flash cards (closed, open, r-controlled, and vowel teams)
- ☐ Words with Schwa (Second Syllable): Read Sheet with Words

WARM UP WITH THE FLASH CARD DECK: Have students practice the syllables they know.

- Use any previously taught syllable-type flash cards — for example, open, closed, and r-controlled syllables.

Syllables to Review:

ta	ped	shuf	gig	ma
tur	siz			

INTRODUCE SCHWA:

- Say, "We have been learning to read and spell multisyllabic words. Sometimes words have a vowel sound that we don't expect. It is an empty sound like all of the stuffing has been taken out of the vowel. We call this sound schwa."
- Have students say the word *schwa*.
- Say, "Vowels can make a short sound, a long sound, and schwa. We know that a multisyllabic word is a word that has more than one what? [syllable] Yes, a multisyllabic word has more than one syllable. And syllables can either be stressed or unstressed. When we feel stressed we focus on one thing and give it a lot of attention and the same thing happens in stressed syllables, we put more attention on one of the syllables. The other part of the word is unstressed, which means it is calm and does not get a lot of attention."

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- Say, "Today we are going to learn how to figure out which part of the word is stressed and getting a lot of attention and which part is unstressed. This strategy is called "call the dog". For example, if I have a dog named *Carson*, when I need to call *Carson* to come into the house I say "*Caaaaaarson*". Can you call the dog with me? [*Caaaaaarson*] Do you hear the part of the word that I say the loudest and stretch it out? What part is that? [*Caaaaaar*]. Yes! The first syllable is *Car-* and I gave more attention to that part. That is the stressed syllable. The second syllable is *-son* and I didn't give as much attention to it. I said it a bit softer, so that is our unstressed syllable. Let's practice calling the dog with some words to figure out the stressed and unstressed syllables."
- Practice the "Call the Dog" strategy with the following words: *wagon*, *basket*, *sandal*, and *cactus*.
- Say, "When we "Call the Dog", we use all of our air or stuffing on the part we call the loudest, the other syllable gets all the stuffing taken out and it can sound like /*ǘ*/ or /*ĩ*/ even if that is not the expected sound of the vowel. When this happens we call it a *schwa*. Schwa is the sound that we hear in the unstressed syllable. When we hear schwa in a syllable, it is taking the place of another vowel. Let's take a look at my dog's name, *Carson*."
- Write *Carson* on the board.
- Say, "Let's practice calling *Carson* one more time. [*Caaaaaarson*] Which part of that word was stressed? [*Car-*] Yes, the first syllable *Car-* is stressed, so the other syllable is unstressed. Did I say /*Car*/,/*sǎn*/? [*No*] What vowel sound do I hear in this syllable? [*ĩ*/] Yes! We hear that /*ĩ*/ sound in this syllable. The second syllable is the unstressed syllable so the vowel sound is taking the schwa sound. In this case it is the /*ĩ*/ sound."
- Say, "Schwa usually sounds like /*ĩ*/ or /*ǘ*/. The vowel sound in the stressed syllable is going to be the sound we expect, but in the unstressed syllable that is where we can hear schwa. So in this word *Carson* the 'o' in the unstressed syllable is taking the sound of another vowel, /*ĩ*/. Schwa can take the place of any vowel in an unstressed syllable in a multisyllabic word."
- Say, "Now we are going to practice finding the stressed syllable in some words by calling the dog. Then we will check to see if the unstressed syllable has a schwa. Our first word is *mitten*. Let's call the dog. [*miiiiiiitten*] What is our stressed syllable? [*mit-*] What vowel sound do we hear in the unstressed syllable? [*ĩ*/] Is that a sound we expect for the letter 'e'? [*no*] So that is a schwa, let's circle it."
- Continue the steps for the following words: *camel*, *basket*, *common*.

Steps:

1. Say the word and ask students to repeat it using the "Call the Dog" strategy.
2. Ask students, "What is the stressed syllable?"
3. Ask students, "What is the vowel sound we hear in the unstressed syllable?"
4. Ask students, "Is that an expected vowel sound for that letter?"
5. If not, then circle the letter to show it is a schwa.

Lesson Plan for Schwa

(Second Syllable in Two-Syllable Word)

READING WORDS AND CONNECTED TEXT TO BUILD FLUENCY: Use the Reading Universe read sheets for this portion of the lesson.

Words:

- For each word, tell the students the word, have them repeat it, and then use the "Call the Dog" strategy. For example, say, "**The word is *basket*. What is the word?** [*basket*] **Now, let's call the dog.**" [*baaaaaasket*]
- Have the students identify the unstressed syllable and highlight the vowel in that syllable. Then read the word again before moving on to the next word.
- To build fluency, read the page again. This time, after each word in the row has been decoded, have the students reread the row more fluently, without segmenting each sound. Continue doing this for all words.
- For the third read, choose an emotion (happy, sad, angry, surprised, etc.) and have the students read the words that way.
- After reading all the words, students will read the sentences. They'll do this three times as well: First, you'll read with them and focus on accurate decoding. Next, they'll reread for fluency. The third time, they'll read with expression.

Words with Schwa (Second Syllable): Student Read Sheet with Words

For this activity, students will practice reading words with schwa. Students will decode words, build accuracy and fluency, and strengthen their vocabulary.

Materials:

- schwa read sheet for each student
- highlighter for each student

Directions:

This activity can be used with a whole class or in a small group.

Explain to the students, "First we will use the "Call the Dog" strategy to figure out the unstressed syllable. Then we will highlight the vowel in the unstressed syllable and discuss the schwa sound it is making. After we have found the schwa in each word, we will read each row of words three times. The first one is to be sure we read the words correctly. The second time is to be sure we read them at a good speed: not too slow and not too fast. The third time we read we will choose an emotion and read the words in that way."

The initial reading of this page should focus on decoding the words accurately.

Steps:

1. For each word, tell the students the word, have them repeat it, and then use the "Call the Dog" strategy. For example, say, "The word is *basket*. What is the word? [basket] Now, let's call the dog." [baaaaaasket]
2. Have the students identify the unstressed syllable and highlight the vowel in that syllable. Then read the word again before moving on to the next word.
3. To build fluency, read the page again. This time, after each word in the row has been decoded, have the students reread the row more fluently, without segmenting each sound. Continue doing this for all words.
4. For the third read, choose an emotion (happy, sad, angry, surprised, etc.) and have the students read the words that way.
5. After reading all the words, students will read the sentences. They'll do this three times as well: First, you'll read with them and focus on accurate decoding. Next, they'll reread for fluency. The third time, they'll read with expression.



For Vocabulary Building: You can help build students' vocabulary by addressing words on the activity page that have multiple meanings or words that students may not know.

- For example, students may not know the meaning of the word *trinket*. You can say, "**Trinket means a small item that can be held in your hand or worn.**"
- Have the students repeat, "*Trinket* means a small item that can be held in your hand or worn."

Teacher Tip: Store each student's read sheet in a folder or binder so they can use them for additional practice, if needed.

Name _____ Date _____

Schwa



blossom	problem	dental	gallon
distant	linen	nickel	path
method	sandal	skillet	fossil
stencil	trinket	second	closet

What is the problem with the sandal?

Follow the path to find the trinket.