

# Decoding Multisyllabic Words in Grades 3-12

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## Overview

This document was created to guide teachers in supporting students in grades 3-12 with decoding and understanding the meaning of multisyllabic words. The information and instructional activities in this guidance were created based on research and proven best practices regarding the roles of syllables and morphological awareness in reading. This guide starts with providing context and content knowledge to teachers for the work they are about to begin. Then, activities for instruction are included for teachers to implement, and videos are embedded throughout to assist teachers with implementation. Lastly, there are anchor charts provided at the end for syllable types and syllable division to be used as a resource while doing multisyllabic work. Many of these activities can be used as a small group intervention activity, while some could also be used by the whole class to reinforce students' decoding skills as they progress through higher grades and encounter more complex words.

This resource is not meant to be all-inclusive, rather it is a starting point for supporting students. As a reminder, teachers should use their knowledge of their students through observation and data to determine where to start with student instruction in decoding multisyllabic words. Teachers can use data from literacy screeners, diagnostics, LEAP data, and curriculum assessments to determine if students need support for targeted literacy skills. As always, once a student's targeted challenges are identified, a plan for intervention that includes progress monitoring should be put in place. For students who need foundational support based on diagnostic data, please consult your Tier I intervention program or the [Louisiana LIFT Library](#).

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# Common Definitions to Know:

- **Affix:** a letter or group of letters that can be added to the beginning or end of a word to change its meaning, usually referred to as prefixes and suffixes
- **Base:** a word form that other morphemes can attach to, such as affixes, prefixes, and suffixes. Bases can include both roots and stems, but not all bases are roots.
- **Blending:** a method used to help children learn to read by combining different sounds, also known as phonemes, to form words.
- **Decoding:** the ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce graphemes.
- **Grapheme:** a letter or group of letters that represent a sound, or phoneme, in written language.
- **Morpheme:** the smallest unit of meaning in a word, and can be a whole word, part of a word, or even a single letter.
- **Morphology:** the study of words and their parts.
- **Phoneme:** the smallest unit of sound in speech. They can be put together to make words.
- **Phonemic Awareness:** the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds (phonemes: The smallest parts of spoken language that combine to form words. ) in spoken words. This includes blending sounds into words, segmenting words into sounds, and deleting and adding sounds in spoken words.
- **Phonological Awareness:** the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of sentences and words.
- **Prefix:** a pair or group of letters added to the front of a base word.
- **Orthography** - the study of language that deals with spelling.
- **Root:** a word or word part that is the core of a word and carries its main meaning.
- **Semantics:** the study of how language makes meaning.
- **Suffix:** a letter or group of letters added to the end of a root word to change its meaning.
- **Syllable:** a single, unbroken vowel sound in a word, along with any consonants or other vowels that are attached to it to create a distinct sound.
- **Syllable Segmenting:** breaking apart a word by the syllables it contains.

# Decoding Multisyllabic Words

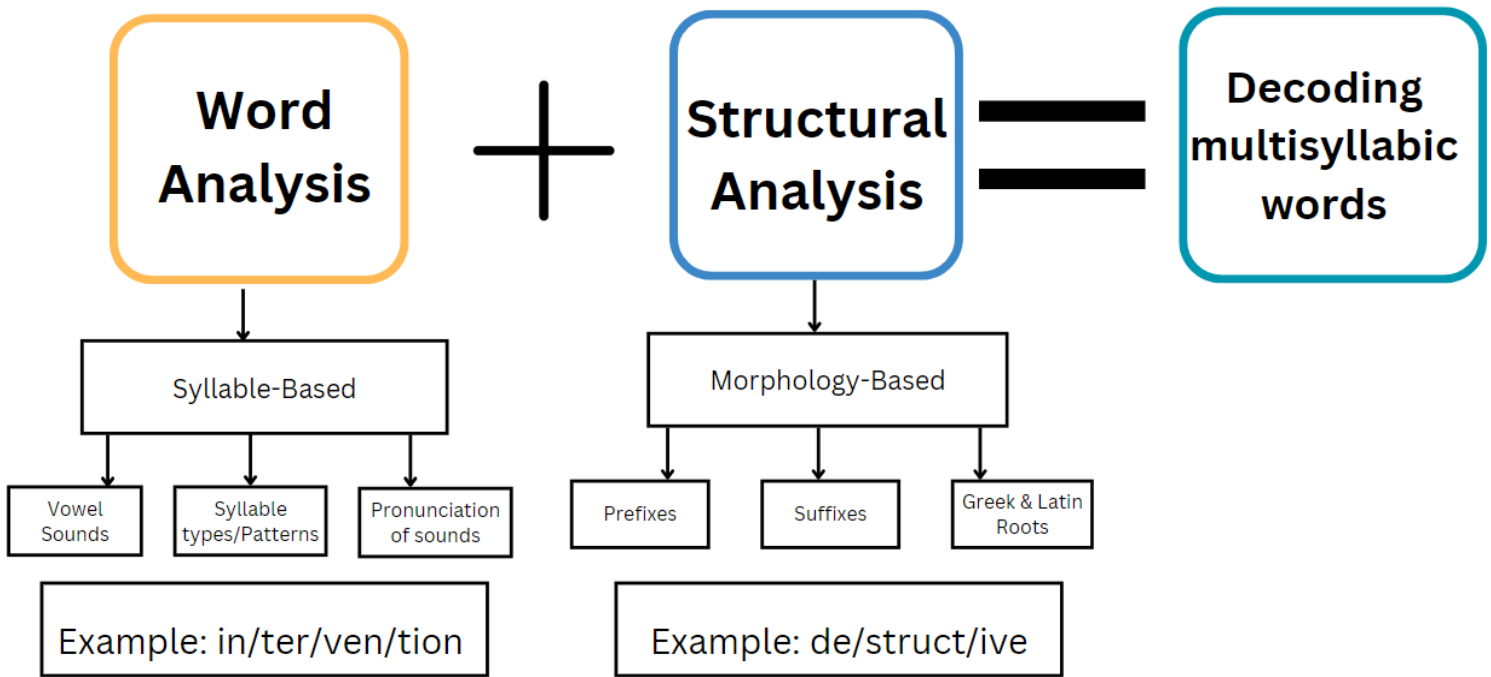
Decoding multisyllabic words requires two processes: word analysis and structural analysis.

1. **Word analysis** refers to the process of examining and understanding the structure and components of words. It involves breaking down words into their basic parts, such as syllables.
2. **Structural analysis** refers to roots, prefixes, and suffixes, to decipher their meanings and relationships within a language (morphology).

Older students benefit from word and structural analysis for several reasons:

1. **Understanding Meaning:** By identifying roots, prefixes, and suffixes, students can understand the meanings of unfamiliar words based on their parts.
2. **Building Vocabulary:** Word analysis and structural analysis help students expand their vocabulary by recognizing common word parts that appear in many words.
3. **Decoding Skills:** It enhances decoding skills by providing clues to the pronunciation and meaning of words, especially multisyllabic ones, enabling readers to become more fluent and proficient with grade-level texts. In addition, this aids in improving spelling.

# Reading Multisyllabic Words



## Word Analysis Progression by Grade Level (adapted from LETRS)

By 3rd grade, students are expected to decode multisyllabic words across content areas; the frequency of these words only increases as students progress through grade levels.

					Greek-Derived Morphemes		
			Derivational Morphology: Anglo-Saxon and Latin Roots, Prefixes, Suffixes				
	Inflectional Morphology						
		Common Syllables, Syllabification					
	Fluent Recognition of Word Families (Rime Patterns)						
	Knows 300-500 words by sight						
	Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondences						
	Basic Phonological Awareness		Advanced Phonemic Awareness				
K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+

(Moats, L. & Tolman, C. 2019)

Decoding multisyllabic words enhances both reading comprehension and spelling for all students. Those with proficient word and structural analysis skills can decode most words they encounter when reading. Students need to be able to decode multisyllabic words for discipline-specific purposes. Equipping them with strategies to decode these words will make the content of any class more accessible to all students. Connect syllable-type instruction to content areas such as science or social studies by exploring discipline-specific vocabulary and word structures (“An Introduction to Academic Vocabulary,” 2019).

**Examples of Multisyllabic Academic Vocabulary by Content Area:**

Math	Science	Social Studies
denominator multiplication division factor horizontal vertical quadratic numerator perimeter coordinate adjacent	conservation investigate sediment condensation accelerate electromagnetic homogenous heterogenous oxidation stimulus mutation	agriculture climate immigrant servitude revolution industrial economic entrepreneur primary canyon migration

# Part One: Word Analysis Through Syllables

## Syllables and Multisyllabic Words:

A syllable is a word or word part that contains a vowel sound. When speaking, the chin will slightly drop when verbalizing each syllable. The number of syllables can be identified by counting how many times the chin drops or clapping out each part of the word as it is spoken.

Students in grades 3-12 encounter mostly multisyllabic words in the texts they read, no matter the content area. Therefore, strategies to decode these words must be explicitly taught to all students. Students who are strong readers will inevitably come across a word they do not know and will need these skills; struggling readers will need the same skills and potentially need to employ them more frequently. According to the *National Institute for Literacy*: “Multisyllabic words are especially important, as these words encompass most of the new vocabulary encountered by adolescents in their reading. Multisyllabic words also provide much of the new information in content-area texts. Teaching word analysis strategies for decoding multisyllabic words helps adolescent readers decode other unknown words, build a sight-word vocabulary, and learn how to spell words” (2007). When decoding multisyllabic words, students need to be taught how to divide the word into parts that they can understand (segmenting), so that they can approach the word using their knowledge of single-syllable word decoding. This helps with decoding, pronunciation, and spelling.

## Syllable Types

Teaching syllable types to older students involves using structured approaches that engage them in understanding the patterns and rules governing syllable division. For many students, this reinforces the syllable types they were taught in lower grades. However, as they begin to read more complex words, students may need to revisit these skills to help them better decode multisyllabic words. Below is a chart to use for reference when teaching syllable types. Students will need direct and explicit instruction on the various syllable types. Breaking the word apart into syllables helps students decode a multisyllabic word by creating smaller, more manageable parts to be read in isolation, and then blended. When teaching syllable concepts, it is important to use common language both across teachers of a grade band and vertically across multiple grade bands within a school/district for continuity of instruction. Charts of these concepts are available in [Appendix A-C](#).

## Syllable Types

Syllable Type	Structure	Characteristics	Examples
Closed (CVC)	Consonant-Vowel-Consonant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only one vowel</li> <li>Vowel followed by consonant(s)</li> <li>Short vowel sound</li> </ul>	cat, sit, dog, crib, brisk
Open (VC)	Vowel-Consonant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only one vowel</li> <li>The vowel is the last letter of the syllable</li> <li>The vowel sound is long</li> </ul>	go, he, bee, ago, robot
Vowel-Consonant-e (VCe)	Vowel-Consonant-e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two vowels– the first is a long vowel</li> <li>The second vowel is a silent “E”</li> </ul>	cake, flute, time
R-controlled	Vowel-r	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One vowel followed by an “r”</li> <li>The vowel is not long or short, but influenced by the /r/ sound</li> </ul>	car, bird, corn
Vowel Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digraph- 2 vowels together that make one sound</li> <li>Diphthong- 2 vowels together that begin with one vowel sound and glide to another</li> <li>Vowel teams - with consonant letters (gh)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vowel with another letter(s) that makes another sound</li> </ul>	Digraph: Sail, green Diphthong: boy, clown Teams: caught, eight
Consonant-le (final stable syllable)	Consonant-le	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common final syllable</li> </ul>	Table, handle, able

Reference: Keys to Literacy & University of Florida Literacy Institute



## Syllabication

Teaching students the syllable types can empower them to break down multisyllabic words into smaller parts so that they can read unknown multisyllabic words when they encounter them in a text. When teaching syllables to upper elementary and older students, while they should have had instruction in previous grades on syllable types, they may need to revisit them.

When teaching students in grades K-2, follow the prescribed progression for teaching syllables within the Tier I curriculum. For upper elementary and older students:

1. Teach open and closed syllables in conjunction, first.
2. Teach the stable final syllable (consonant - le) separately from open and closed.
3. The other syllable types can be taught (if needed) after the open, close, and final stable syllables. They can be taught separately or together depending on student needs.
4. Once students are familiar with syllable types, teach common syllable division patterns.
  - a. Teach students to label the vowels, then consonants, to determine the pattern and appropriately divide the syllables.
  - b. Once divided, read the syllables individually, then blend them to read the whole word.
    - i. When blending students should sound out the vowel based on what the syllable type is, but teach students to flex the vowel between long and short sounds when necessary.

*University of Florida Literacy Institute*

Other considerations for teaching:

- Introduce syllables with direct & explicit instruction.
- Students should practice reading words of the focus syllable type to build fluency (this can be done through timed drills).
- Have students write with words that contain the focus syllable type(s), as well as read those types of words in the text.
- Try to use words that are in connected texts when applicable.
- Anchor charts are a good tool to implement as a reference for students.
- Use academic vocabulary words relevant to the content area when applicable.

## Syllable Division

Successfully decoding multisyllabic words through syllable division can reduce cognitive load, enhance comprehension, and build students' confidence in their reading abilities. It empowers them to tackle more complex texts independently.

By dividing a word into smaller syllables, students can process each part separately, making it easier to manage and decode the word as a whole. Syllable division often aligns with phonics rules, such as vowel-consonant patterns (e.g., VC/CV) or consonant-le patterns, which students can apply to decode unfamiliar words systematically (University of Florida Literacy Institute, 2020). Lastly, pronouncing each syllable correctly contributes to overall fluency and comprehension, allowing students to focus on correct pronunciation and stress patterns within words.

### Common Syllable Division Patterns:

Division Pattern	Description	Example
VC*CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vowel-consonant-consonant-Vowel</li> <li>● Divided between the two consonants.</li> <li>● Do not split digraphs</li> </ul>	napkin (nap/kin)  picnic (pic/nic)  rocket (rock/et)
V*CV or VC*V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vowel-consonant-vowel</li> <li>● Sometimes divided after 1st vowel                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If not, divide after the consonant</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Determining where to divide will help determine the long or short vowel sound of a word.</li> </ul>	open (o/pen)  cabin (cab/in)
VC*CCV or VCC*CV or VCCC*V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vowel- consonant-consonant- consonant-vowel</li> <li>● Allows digraphs to stay cohesive</li> <li>● Can be divided:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ after the first consonant</li> <li>○ After the second or third consonant</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	hundred (hun/dred)  pumpkin (pump/kin)

### Uncommon Patterns to Know:

Pattern	Description	Example
VCCCCV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Typically compound words that are obvious where to divide</li> <li>● Sometimes three consonants must stay together in the second syllable</li> </ul>	statement (state/ment)  construct (con/struct)
VV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One-sound vowel team</li> <li>● Sometimes division between the vowels is needed</li> <li>● More common in words with 3 or more syllables</li> </ul>	lion (li/on)  piano (pi/an/o)

Reference: Keys to Literacy & University of Florida Literacy Institute

## Activities for Syllable Instruction for Students

The following activities build in complexity. Teachers should use their discretion and knowledge of their students' needs to select where on this continuum instruction should start for their students. For example, if a student is unable to break apart syllables, this is the starting point for instruction. Another note to remember is that these are suggested activities to use for instruction, so it is not always necessary to use every single activity found in this guide. Teachers need to know the needs of their students and make decisions for instruction based on their data from assessment and progress monitoring.

### Syllable Mapping

This process will help students see the relationship between phonemes (letter sounds) and syllables (composed of graphemes or letters that correspond to phonemes), and then, ultimately, how those syllables make big words.

This activity can be done with whiteboards:

1. Choose a multisyllabic word to map. For example, let's use the word "fantastic." Present this word to students and read it out loud.
2. Determine how many syllables the word has. Say the word slowly and clap or tap for each syllable. Be sure that among grade levels, the same method is used for continuity's sake.
  - a. For "fantastic," we get three syllables: fan-tas-tic.
  - b. Remind students of the patterns already taught to them and refer to an anchor chart if needed.
    - i. They should know that a syllable has to have a vowel sound, so if students struggle, start with identifying the vowels, followed by the consonant(s) around them to identify vowel types and patterns to help them determine where to split a word into syllable parts.
    - ii. See the instructions on the following pages for coding and Spot & Dot.
3. Draw a box around each syllable separately.
  - a. For "fantastic": fan, tas, tic.

fan	tas	tic
-----	-----	-----

- i. To progress or extend, consider asking students to repeat back to you what each syllable of the word is, but in random order.
  - ii. If students struggle with this, before this activity, have students practice syllables by having students put their hands under their chins and count how many times the chin pushes the hand down to determine how many syllables are there.
4. Identify the phonemes of each of the syllables by drawing dashes underneath each letter as the teacher says the sound out loud.
    - a. Count out how many sounds are heard in each syllable to help show how many phonemes are present for students who need it
      - i. Make sure students are repeating these sounds to you, and then saying them independently.
      - ii. To progress or extend, consider having students spell each syllable in random order based on the phonemes they hear.

- b. Have students write the corresponding grapheme for each phoneme they hear as they say it out loud.
5. Remove the written example of the word and have students write the word themselves.
  - a. For students who may need more support here, consider providing them with sound boxes to write each syllable in. For the word “fantastic” the teacher would provide three blank boxes. This will help cue the students to write three different syllables to spell the word.
6. Students should then practice using this word at the sentence level.
  - a. A student-friendly definition of the word will need to be provided before students can do this.

### Coding Vowels, Consonants, & Syllables

1. Present a multisyllabic word to students and have them underline the vowels.
2. Use a slash or asterisk to mark between each syllable.
3. Label the vowels with a small letter “v” underneath each vowel.
4. Label the consonants with a small letter “c” underneath each consonant.
5. Use the annotations to help students to identify the patterns, using an anchor chart if needed.
  - a. Students should label each syllable type created by each syllable.
  - b. Consider also having students label the vowel sound as long (using a horizontal line above the vowel), short (using a short upwardly curved line above the vowel), an upside-down e for schwa vowels, and circling -r controlled.
6. Have students practice saying the syllables aloud and then blending.

#### Example:



*Adapted from: University of Florida Literacy Institute and The Simple Teachers*

### Spot and Dot

1. Display a multisyllabic word to students and ask them to spot or identify the vowels they see and mark those with a dot above the vowels.
2. Then connect the first dot, to the second dot and count how many consonants exist between those two vowels to determine where to split syllables with a vertical line
  - a. it is two consonants, they will likely divide between them.
  - b. If it is one consonant they will likely divide after the consonant.
3. Orally say the words parts that are created out loud separately, and then independently.
4. When needed, refer to anchor charts on syllable types and division.

Here are videos demonstrating this activity:

- [Spot and dot](#)
- [Two different multisyllabic words w/ specific spelling patterns](#)

## Reading Multisyllabic Words by Dividing Syllables

1. Start with a multisyllabic word and identify the vowels.
2. Then label the consonants.
3. Determine the syllable pattern and divide accordingly.
4. Have students read the syllables out loud, then as a blended word.

\*Creates two closed syllables, so we know the vowel sounds are short.\*

### Example videos:

- [Process to Teach Decoding Multisyllabic Words](#)
- [5th Grade Multisyllabic Word Reading Lesson](#)



## Activities for Instruction of Syllable Types for Students

### Fluency Practice

It is important to work on fluency with students learning to decode multisyllabic words because it will positively impact their comprehension ability. Students who are fluent readers can read more quickly and with proper expression, meaning they have to spend less mental energy decoding words because it is more automatic. Non-fluent readers tend to read slowly and at a “choppy” pace,” inhibiting their ability to make meaning of what they read. This can be improved through hearing models of fluent reading, direct and explicit instruction on targeted syllable and spelling patterns that students struggle with, and practicing reading out loud independently, chorally, or as an echo, sometimes under timed conditions (“fluency in practice”).

1. Create a grid and select 3-5 multisyllabic words that contain one or two of the previously taught syllable types. Randomize the words across the grid.
2. Set a one-minute timer and record how many times the student read the words correctly in the minute.
3. Repeat periodically to track progress. Use this data to determine if a student needs further instruction on a specified syllable type.

Sample grid for closed and open syllables:

cabin	rocket	relax	total	rocket	relax
total	cabin	rocket	relax	total	rocket
rocket	relax	cabin	total	rocket	cabin
relax	rocket	total	cabin	relax	cabin
relax	cabin	rocket	total	cabin	total

1st timed read: \_\_\_\_\_ number of words read correctly

2nd timed read: \_\_\_\_\_ number of words read correctly

3rd timed read: \_\_\_\_\_ number of words read correctly

## Syllable Sorting

One of the foundational skills that supports decoding multisyllabic words is being able to identify both how many syllables are present and the syllable type. Knowing the type clues students into key components of the word, like vowel sounds. For example, we know that closed syllables have short vowel sounds; or the silent e creates a long vowel sound.

1. Provide a chart with multisyllabic words listed in the left column, and the syllable types across the top row.
2. Have students mark which column corresponds to the syllable type present in each word.

### Example:

Word	Closed	Open	Consonant-le	R-controlled vowel	Vowel team	Silent -e
bottle	bot		tle			
include	in					clude
cover	cov			er		

\*Students should practice orally segmenting the syllables and blending them into whole words.

## Nonsense Syllable Sort

While it is best to practice with real words, using nonsense words can potentially reveal where students may have problems with letter-sound correspondence. The following is adapted from Keys to Literacy Advanced Word Study course.

1. Provide students with nonsense multisyllabic words (words that are not real words, but contain more than one syllable) or a mix of nonsense words and real words.
2. The syllables should be types that have already been explicitly taught.
3. Have students categorize the words by syllable types.
4. Make sure students are reading the syllables and nonsense words out loud.

**Example:** Read each nonsense word out loud, then write the word broken by syllables underneath. Be sure to label each type of syllable.

### Word list:

Tredment  
Jonter  
Ziker

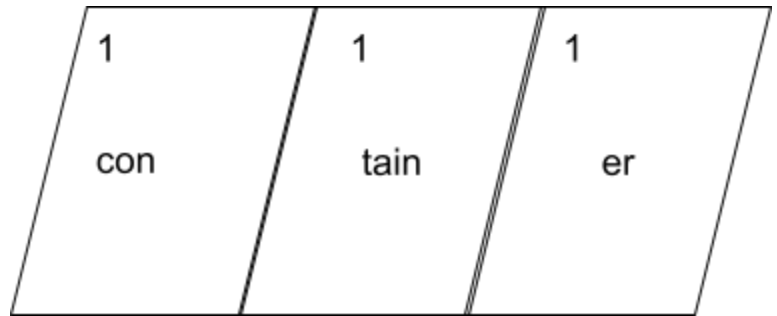
rotest  
Loter  
Wegge

## Multisyllabic Word Puzzles

This is good to implement with words with 3 or more syllables; however, use the same 1-2 syllable types at a time when doing this activity. This activity should be done after explicit instruction on the syllable types and used to reinforce those concepts while helping students to decode multisyllabic words. Consider doing this as a pre-reading activity with words students will see in the text. The following is adapted from Keys to Literacy Advanced Word Study course.

1. Chunk the words by syllables into different puzzle pieces. Puzzle pieces that belong to the same word should have the same number written on the back or in the corner so students know which syllables go together.
2. Pass out one piece to each student.
3. Have students practice saying the syllable out loud that they receive before calling all students of a number to the room to piece together the word their syllables form.
4. Have the students read the word created out loud, then work together to use the word in a sentence.
5. Repeat until all of the puzzles have been solved.

**Example puzzle to be cut and distributed to students:**



## Syllable Card Sort

Students must combine their knowledge of syllable types with their decoding skills and some of their phoneme-grapheme awareness to excel at this activity. This is another pre-reading activity students can do to work with words they will be reading in the text. The following is adapted from Keys to Literacy Advanced Word Study course.

1. Cut small index cards in half and write syllables on each card that can be used to form words; make sure there is a variety of all the syllable types.
2. Create a chart for each student on paper that has a large box at the top labeled “word” with six smaller boxes labeled for each syllable type.

Word		
Closed	Vowel Team	Vowel-consonant-le
Open	Vowel-r	Consonant-le (final)

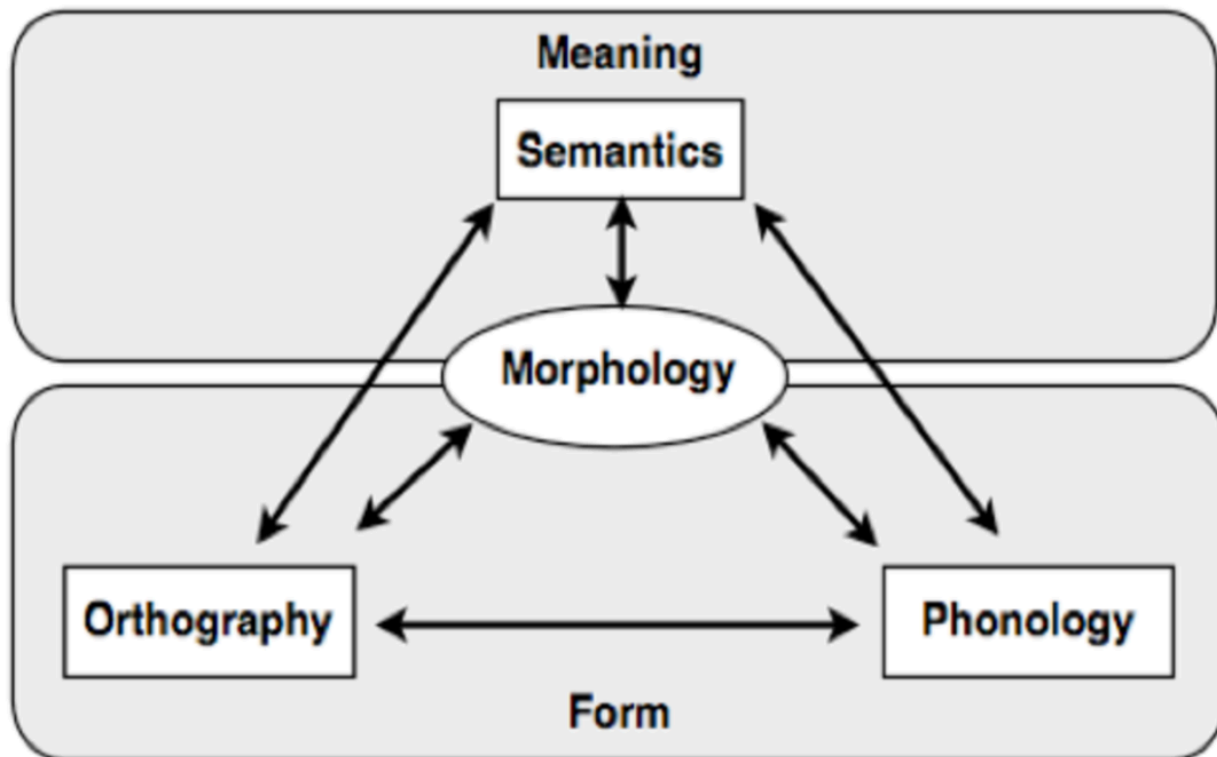
3. Put students in pairs or small groups and have them read the syllables out loud and sort the syllables into the appropriate syllable type box.
4. Then, progress to giving them cut index cards with the syllables of multisyllabic words written on them.
5. Have students read the syllables out loud in their groups and place the word in the “word” box before moving the syllable types to the correct syllable box.
6. Repeat this until all of the cards have been categorized.
7. To build fluency, have students take each pile of syllable cards one at a time and practice reading them out loud.
8. Whenever possible, students should progress from isolated word practice to sentence practice, to reading the words in text.



## Part Two: Morphology

**Morphology** is the study of words by breaking the word into its smallest chunks of meaning also known as morphemes. This can be in roots, bases, or affixes (prefixes and suffixes). English is referred to as a morphophonemic language. This means that to decode words in English effectively, one needs phonemic awareness and morphological awareness. Students with strong morphological awareness can decode multisyllabic words through structural analysis of unfamiliar words. Instruction in morphology begins in early grades but should be continually reinforced and built upon throughout schooling. An emphasis on learning word parts in addition to the relationship of a word to the rest of a sentence, as well as how a morphological change can impact the function of a word is all a part of morphological awareness (“What should morphology”, 2023).

Morphology instruction is most impactful when it is used to help students understand how words are structured and how that structure creates meaning. This means students will need instruction regarding morphology *in conjunction with semantics, orthography, and phonology*.



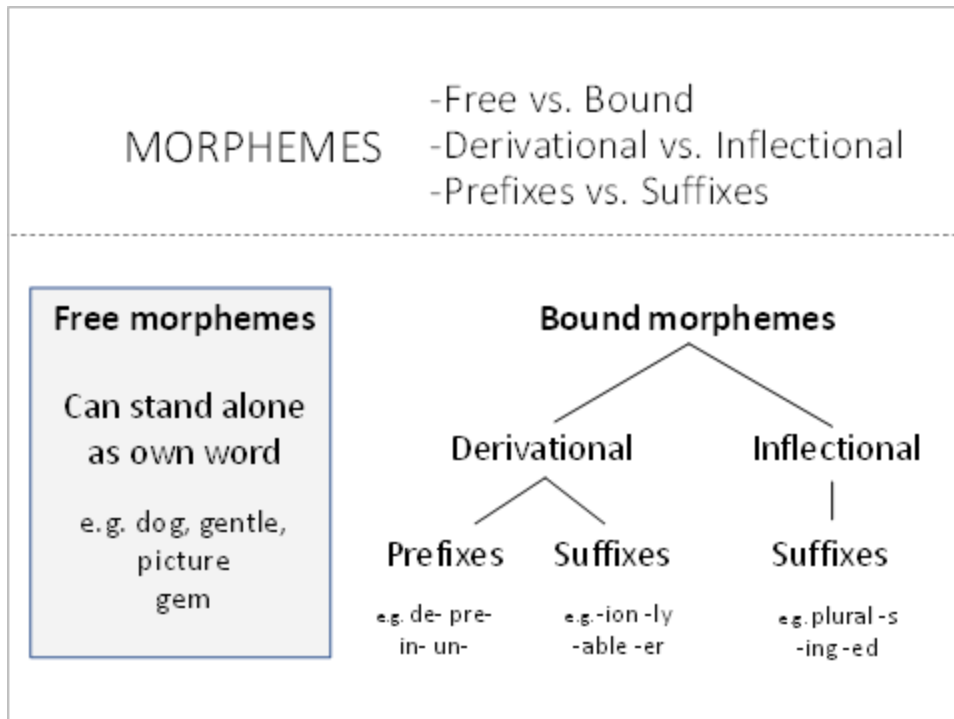
Source: J. Kirby, Peter N. Bowers, Morphological instruction and literacy

Semantics and morphology instruction involves discussing how adding an affix changes the function of a word (ex: noun to verb, tense, number); orthography and morphology instruction is comprised of teaching spelling patterns and rules when adding affixes to bases and roots; and, lastly, phonology and morphology instruction incorporating phonics instruction with morphological awareness (remember, English is a morphophonemic language). These components are intertwined and contribute to students’ ability to decode multisyllabic words (Institute for Multi-Sensory Education, 2023).

## Morphemes

Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning within a word. Three derivative origins make up all English words: Latin, Greek, and Anglo-Saxon. The majority of the words in English are of Latin or Greek origin; many of the discipline-specific words in Science and Social Studies are of Greek origin. Latin-originated words make up much of the language in humanities-based content, and Anglo-Saxon words are used frequently in daily speech (2019). Roots are the main part of a word that carries meaning; a base is a word form that other morphemes can attach to. Bases can include roots, but not all bases are roots. Some bases

are free, meaning they can stand alone as a word, while others are bound, meaning they need to be attached to another morpheme to make a word.



*From Victoria State Government Department of Education*

For further explanations of morphology and its uses in the classroom, view the following videos from the LDOE YouTube Channel or complete the morphology section of the Content Literacy Series on Canopy:

1. [Morphology Part 1](#)
2. [Morphology Part 2](#)
3. Canopy Course Code: CBB577NN

## Teaching Morphological Awareness

The following guidelines for teaching structural analysis have been adapted from *Teaching Phonics and Word Study in Intermediate Grades* (Blevins, 2023). It serves as a general process outline when working with students to better decode multisyllabic words:

1. Explicitly teach that words can be made up of multiple parts that can give clues to word pronunciation and meaning.
2. Rely on explicit, direct instruction in which students are aware of the purpose for learning a skill and taught how to apply it. Multiple opportunities should be provided for students to demonstrate this learning with feedback from the teacher. This instruction should focus on morphemes and how these parts work together to create meaning in a word, as well as the word within the context of a sentence.
3. Teach words in context as much as possible by focusing on examples of words from the texts read in class. This should include discussing how the word functions in a sentence, as well as how changes to the word (like a different suffix) could impact the meaning of the word. This provides a more authentic experience for students to see how a skill they were taught applies to “real life.”
4. Highlight the limitations of morphology by also teaching students instances where there may be exceptions to rules.
5. Apply as often as possible to HQIM.

## Roots and Bases

When teaching roots and bases (see Greek Bases on page 21) teachers should:

- Focus on the most common ones to give students the largest base of knowledge possible.
- Consider grouping into similar categories like number or size to help students commit new knowledge to their memory.
- Give students opportunities to practice analyzing words once they have been explicitly instructed on specific roots/bases.

## Common Latin Roots

Latin Root	Definition	Example
ambi	both	ambiguous, ambidextrous
aqua	water	aquarium, aquamarine
aud	to hear	audience, audition
bene	good	benefactor, benevolent
cent	one hundred	century, percent
circum	around	circumference, circumstance
contra/counter	against	contradict, encounter
dict	to say	dictation, dictator
duc/duct	to lead	conduct, induce
fac	to do; to make	factory, manufacture
form	shape	conform, reform
fort	strength	fortitude, fortress
fract	break	fracture, fraction
ject	throw	projection, rejection
jud	judge	judicial, prejudice
mal	bad	malevolent, malefactor
mater	mother	maternal, maternity
mit	to send	transmit, admit
mort	death	mortal, mortician
multi	many	multimedia, multiple
pater	father	paternal, paternity
port	to carry	portable, transportation
rupt	to break	bankrupt, disruption
scrib/script	to write	inscription, prescribe
sect/sec	to cut	bisect, section
sent	to feel; to send	consent, resent
spect	to look	inspection, spectator
struct	to build	destruction, restructure
vid/vis	to see	televise, video
voc	voice; to call	vocalize, advocate

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## Common Greek Roots

Greek Root	Definition	Example
anthropo	man; human; humanity	anthropologist, philanthropy
auto	self	autobiography, automobile
bio	life	biology, biography
chron	time	chronological, chronic
dyna	power	dynamic, dynamite
dys	bad; hard; unlucky	dysfunctional, dyslexic
gram	thing written	epigram, telegram
graph	writing	graphic, phonograph
hetero	different	heteronym, heterogeneous
homo	same	homonym, homogenous
hydr	water	hydration, dehydrate
hyper	over; above; beyond	hyperactive, hyperbole
hypo	below; beneath	hypothermia, hypothetical
logy	study of	biology, psychology
meter/metr	measure	thermometer, perimeter
micro	small	microbe, microscope
mis/miso	hate	misanthrope, misogyny
mono	one	monologue, monotonous
morph	form; shape	morphology, morphing
nym	name	antonym, synonym
phil	love	philanthropist, philosophy
phobia	fear	claustrophobia, phobic
photo/phos	light	photograph, phosphorous
pseudo	false	pseudonym, pseudoscience
psycho	soul; spirit	psychology, psychic
scope	viewing instrument	microscope, telescope
techno	art; science; skill	technique, technological
tele	far off	television, telephone
therm	heat	thermal, thermometer

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## Prefixes

When teaching prefixes, consider the following:

- Students should know that prefixes are at the beginning of words that can alter the meaning of the root it is attached to.
- Teach students to determine if a group of letters is a prefix, they can remove them by covering them up; if what's left makes a word, they are a prefix. If what remains is not a word, then those letters are not acting as a prefix.
- Teach the multiple meanings of a prefix.
- Teach the most common prefixes to students to provide a wide breadth of knowledge to use when decoding multisyllabic words.

### Common Prefixes

Prefix	Definition	Example
anti-	against	anticlimax
de-	opposite	devalue
dis-	not; opposite of	discover
en-, em-	cause to	enact, empower
fore-	before; front of	foreshadow, forearm
In-, im-	in	income, impulse
in-, im-, il-, ir-	not	indirect, immoral, illiterate, irreverent
inter-	between; among	interrupt
mid-	middle	midfield
mis-	wrongly	misspell
non-	not	nonviolent
over-	over; too much	overeat
pre-	before	preview
re-	again	rewrite
semi-	half; partly; not fully	semifinal
sub-	Under	subway
super-	above; beyond	superhuman
trans-	across	transmit
un-	not; opposite of	unusual
under-	under; too little	underestimate

## Suffixes

When teaching suffixes, consider the following:

- Suffixes change the meaning of the base word, and, at times, the part of speech.
- Inflectional suffixes change the form of a word, but not the meaning or part of speech.
- Derivational suffixes change the meaning and/or part of speech of a word when added.
- Some suffixes have specific spelling patterns that should be explicitly taught.
  - Consonant doubling- swimmer, swimming
  - Changing y to i - craziest, happier
  - Deleting the silent e - baking, making
- Only teach the most common prefixes to students to provide a wide breadth of knowledge to use when decoding multisyllabic words.

## Common Suffixes

Suffix	Definition	Example
-able, -ible	is; can be	affordable, sensible
-al, -ial	having characteristics of	universal, facial
-ed	past tense verbs; adjectives	the dog walked, the walked dog
-en	made of	golden
-er, -or	one who; person connected with	teacher, professor
-er	more	taller
-est	the most	tallest
-ful	full of	helpful
-ic	having characteristics of	poetic
-ing	verb forms; present participles	sleeping
-ion, -tion, -ation, -ition	act; process	submission, motion, Relation, edition
-ity, -ty	state of	activity, society
-ive, -ative, -itive	adjective form of noun	active, comparative, sensitive
-less	without	hopeless
-ly	how something is	lovely
-ment	state of being; act of	contentment
-ness	state of; condition of	openness
-ous, -eous, -ious	having qualities of	riotous, courageous, gracious
-s, -es	more than one	trains, trenches
-y	characterized by	gloomy

## Systematic Approach to Decoding Multisyllabic Words through Morphology

1. Start with a multisyllabic word presented to students
2. Identify and mark the known prefixes and suffixes
  - a. This can be done by covering, boxing, or circling the affixes. Choose a consistent method.
3. Identify the vowels using a method like Spot and Dot.
  - a. You can discuss syllable patterns here if needed.
4. Have students read the word parts out loud, then as a blended word.
5. Discuss the meanings of the various word parts to help develop a definition of the word
  - a. Check to see if this works in the context of a sentence.

### Example videos:

- [5th Grade Multisyllabic Word Reading Lesson](#)
- [Peeling Off Morphemes Strategy](#)

## Instructional Activities for Morphological Awareness for Students

These strategies build in complexity and can be used in small-group or whole-group instruction to help students build vocabulary and morphological awareness. Developing this skill will help students to become more independent when decoding new multisyllabic words and in making meaning from unfamiliar words in a variety of contexts.

### Spot the Root

This is a very basic strategy to work with students who are just learning about what a base/root is. It helps them to see that there are recognizable smaller words in longer words which can help them to determine the meaning of the long word.

Use a list of complex words with base/roots that students have already been taught. Then, have the students identify the root word in each of the complex words. Have them practice saying the root out loud and the more complex word that it is part of.



## Simple Morpheme Matrices

One approach to teaching students about how morphemes can change the meanings of words visually is through a word matrix. Students should have already had explicit instruction regarding any roots, bases, or affixes used in this activity. As always, remember that students engaged in these instructional activities should be engaging with the words or morphemes within texts in class to see how they are used in context. Communicate to students the purpose of activities like this: to learn how morphemes make up various components of words and how readers can use this awareness to decode unfamiliar words they encounter in class and in reading in the real world.

<b>Prefixes</b>	<b>Latin Root or Greek Base</b> (meaning)	<b>Suffixes</b>
-----------------	--	-----------------

1. Present the root or base to students in the center box. Pronounce it clearly, then have students repeat it. Inform students of the meaning of the morpheme.
  - a. Consider discussion if it is a free or bound morpheme and then explain that you will be adding prefixes and suffixes to it to see how the word changes or new words can be formed.
2. Work with suffixes first. Introduce each suffix individually, model how to pronounce the new word, and then discuss how the suffix changes the meaning of the word. Students should be writing the suffixes as each is introduced.
  - a. Use the new words in sentences to show how they are used in context.
3. Repeat this process with prefixes only (disregard the suffixes in step 2).
4. Repeat this process with prefixes and suffixes.
5. Consider discussing spelling patterns and/or syllables when appropriate.
6. Students should practice using the words in sentences both in writing and orally.

### Example of Matrices and Meanings:

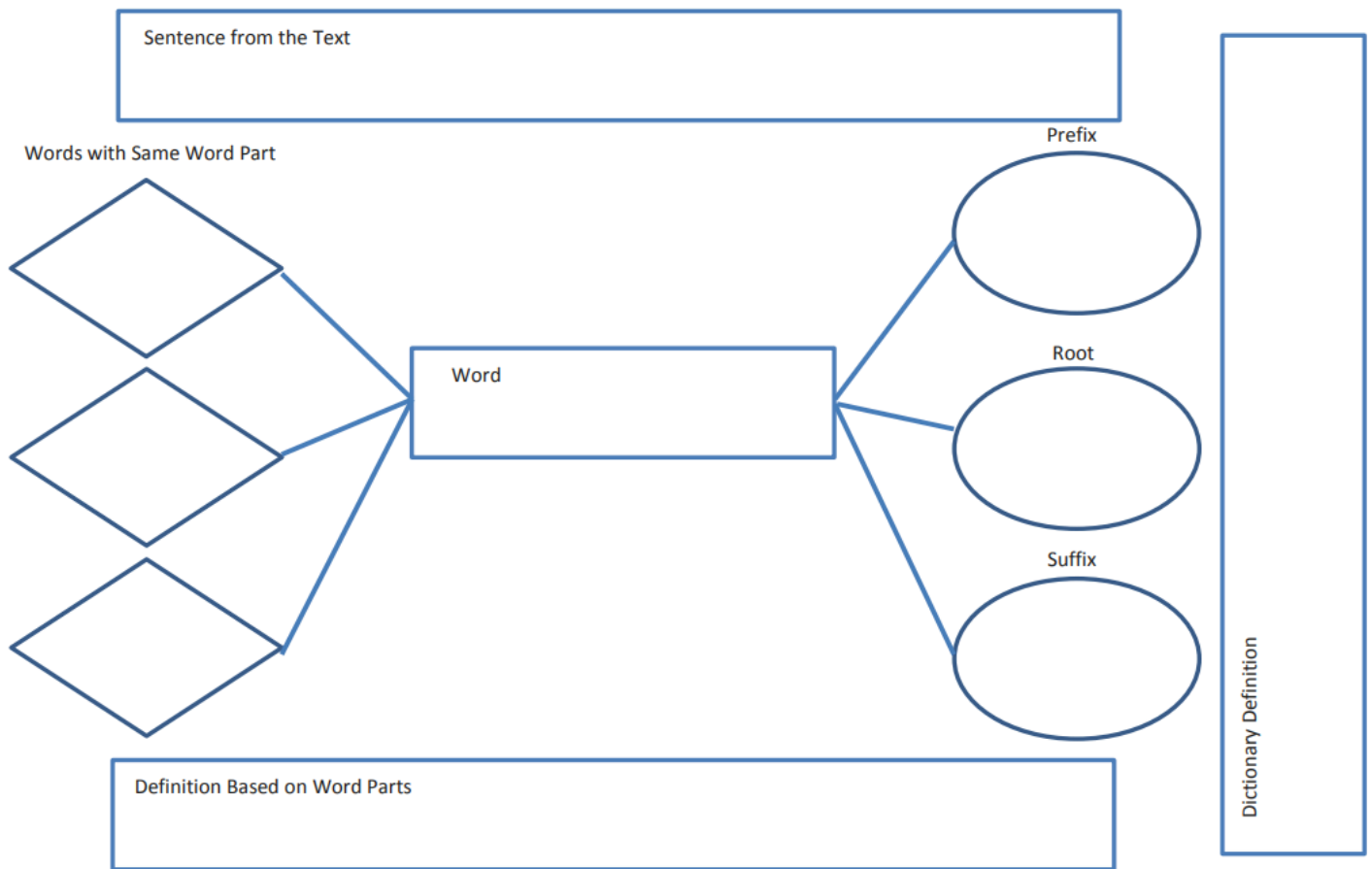
<b>Word: Previewed</b>		
<b>Prefix</b>	<b>Root</b>	<b>Suffix</b>
pre (before)	view (see)	ed (past tense)
Previewed means the action of having seen or viewed something before the actual event.		
In context: The teacher previewed the book before assigning the students to read it.		

*Adapted from Atlas Literacy*

## Semantic Morphological Mapping

The use of semantic mapping will help students to see how the various morphemes create meaning. This is a good strategy for new vocabulary words students may encounter during a class reading. Using high-leverage words that are relevant to the content at hand is advisable for this activity to maximize instruction. This instructional practice provides students with an explicit, procedural approach to decoding unfamiliar multisyllabic words by examining word parts to make inferences about the meaning of a word.

### Sample Map:



A printable version of this can be found [here](#).

1. Choose a word from a sentence in text students will read or have read to use for explicit instruction on how to use this map for students.
2. Students should know that the purpose of this activity is to help students determine the meaning of big words they have read or will read.
3. Have students write the sentence from the text at the top and the word to analyze in the center box. Model how to divide the word by morphemes and write these to the right of the word.

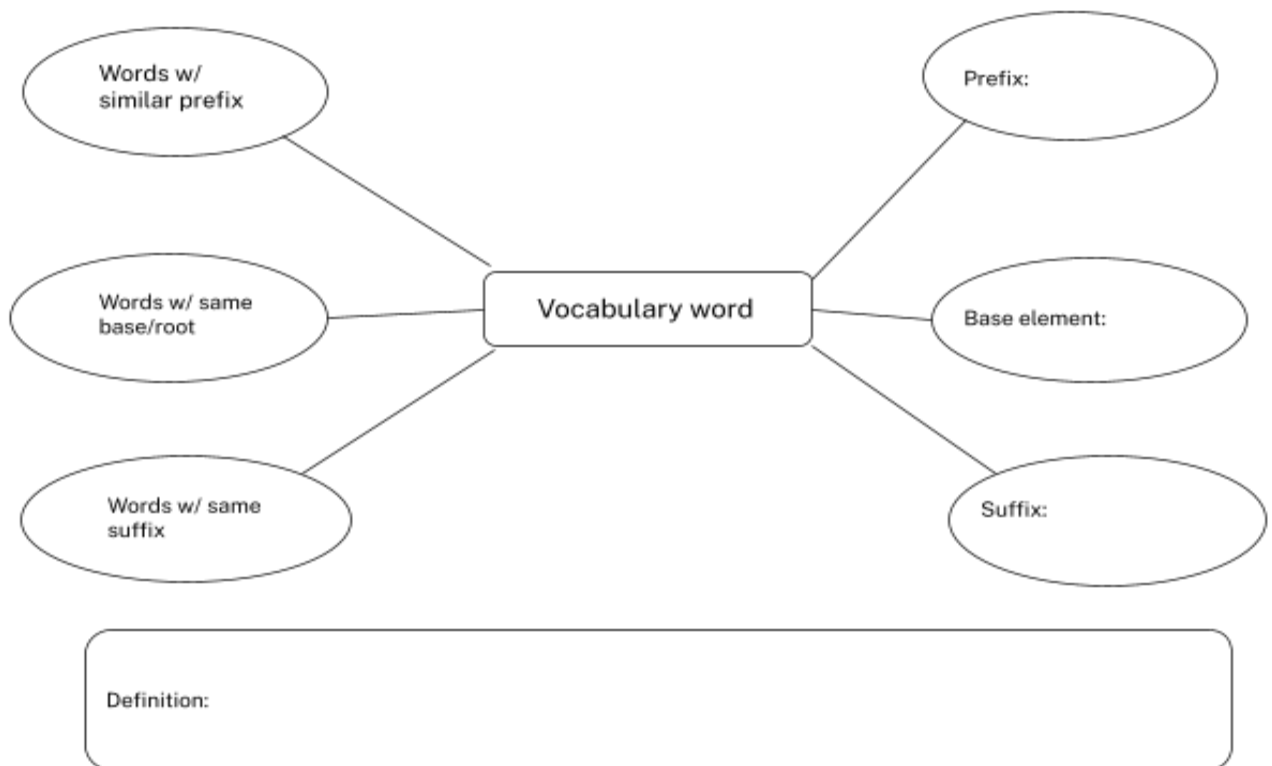
- a. Model to students a think-aloud that demonstrates what we already know each of the morphemes means.
4. Think aloud a list of 3-4 words that have some of the same morphemes to write in the left-hand column of the map.
  - a. Model to students through a think-aloud how the morphemes to the right fit into these words
5. Make an inference for the definition of the word based on the morphemes and write it in the box at the bottom of the page.
6. Check the inferred definition against the dictionary definition, which should be written on the right-hand side of the map.
  - a. Discuss the similarities and differences between the inferred definition and the dictionary one to highlight how the morphemes help to decode and construct meaning from the new vocabulary word.
  - b. Refer to the words that were listed with similar morphemes and make connections to the definitions of those words and the new ones.

Adapted from The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

### Another Variation of a Morphology Map:

Adapted from  
AIMS Pathways  
Proficient  
Writing

Sentence from text containing the vocabulary word: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Matching Morphemes Activity

This activity will allow students to manipulate words and make connections regarding how various affixes impact the meaning and function of a word.

1. Create a list of affixes the students have already been taught and write each one on an index card; put the meaning of the affix in smaller print underneath. Then create base/root cards that could be combined with the affixes to make other words.
2. Using the whiteboard draw a three-column chart. Place the prefix cards on the left column, select a base/root card to put in the center column, and the suffix cards on the right column.
3. Move a prefix card up and place it in front of the base/root. Read the new word to the class, and then put it together as a class. Discuss if this is a real word or not and how the affix changes the meaning or the function of the base/root.
  - a. Repeat this with a suffix
  - b. Do a few rounds of this together before having students come up to the board to lead this activity

Other variations:

- c. Give students stacks of affix and base/root cards and have them work in pairs or small groups to create new words and use their morphemes to define them.
  - i. This should only be done after they have gone through this activity with the whole class and are proficient.
- d. Students write the new words and map them using phoneme-grapheme.
- e. Students write the new words and use them in sentences
- f. Use the words created through this activity to create a fluency grid.

*Adapted from Keys To Literacy- Advanced Word Study*

## Word Spotlight

In this activity, students will use their morphological awareness skills to decode new content-specific words in a lesson.

1. Select 1-2 complex words from the content of the day's lesson/reading to spotlight when they emerge in the lesson.
2. Guide students through analyzing the words via morphemes when each word is encountered.
  - a. Discuss the root word and how the affixes attached to it impact the meaning and function of the word.
  - b. Have students practice reading the morphemes in isolation and then blend them together.
  - c. Students should try to use the word in a sentence.
  - d. Discuss how removing or adding affixes would impact the meaning of the word.

*Adapted from Teaching Morphological Awareness to Improve Literacy, Zeh 2017*

## Word Families & Word Webs

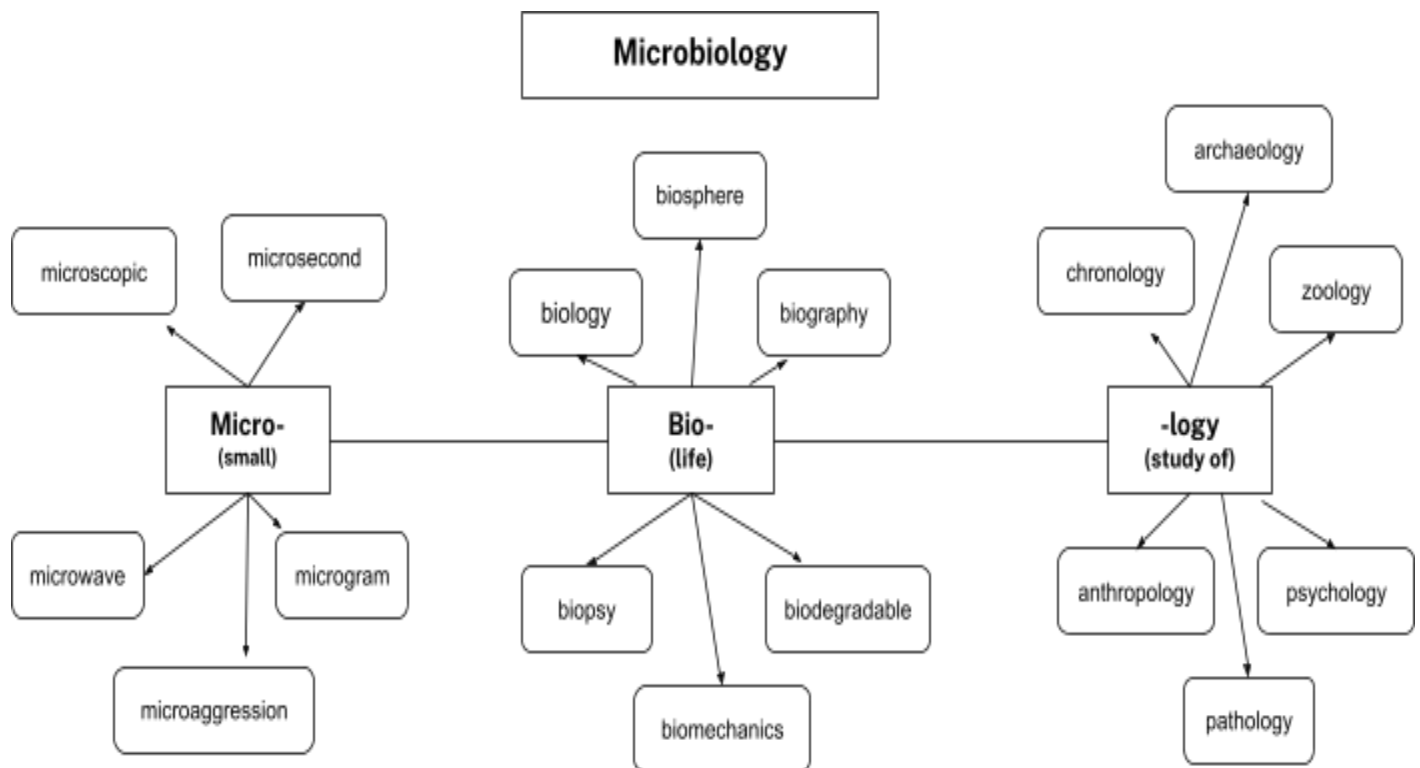
These next two activities build off one another. Students need to understand word families to complete word webs for complex words.

### Word Families:

1. Present students with a base or root and discuss the meaning. Have students create as many words as possible using the affixes they have already been taught.
2. Discuss the new meaning of each word, including how the affix changed the function of the word
3. Have students read the new words aloud and use them in sentences correctly.

### Word Webs:

This will work best for complex words if students have already had explicit instruction on morphemes and have shown some proficiency with those concepts. Students will identify the morphemes, and each of those will have a center spot on a web with the meaning of the morpheme included. From there students will write as many words in the branches using that morpheme as possible. Allow for discussion of what those words mean, and how knowing that morpheme helped them to define the words. For the example below, we will use the word “microbiology:



Adapted from *Keys to Literacy- Advanced Word Study*

# Appendix

## Appendix A: CLOVER Syllables Type Anchor Chart

### 6 Syllable Types - CLOVER

Syllable Type	Structure	Characteristics	Examples
<b>C</b> losed (CVC)	Consonant-Vowel-Consonant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only one vowel</li> <li>Vowel followed by consonant(s)</li> <li>Short vowel sound</li> </ul>	cat, sit, dog
Consonant- <b>L</b> e (final stable syllable)	Consonant-le	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common final syllable</li> </ul>	Table, handle, able
<b>O</b> pen (VC)	Vowel-Consonant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only one vowel</li> <li>The vowel is the last letter of the syllable</li> <li>The vowel sound is long</li> </ul>	go, he, bee
<b>V</b> owel Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digraph- 2 vowels together that make one sound</li> <li>Diphthong- 2 vowels together that begin with one vowel sound and glide to another</li> <li>Vowel teams - with consonant letters (gh)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vowel with another letter(s) that makes another sound</li> </ul>	Digraph: Sail, green Diphthong: boy, clown Teams: caught, eight
Vowel-Consonant- <b>E</b> t- (VCe)	Vowel-Consonant-e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two vowels– the first is a long vowel</li> <li>The second vowel is a silent “E”</li> </ul>	cake, flute, time
<b>R</b> -controlled	Vowel-r	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One vowel followed by an “r”</li> <li>The vowel is not long or short</li> </ul>	car, bird, corn

## Common Syllable Division Patterns

Division Pattern	Description	Example
VC*CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vowel-consonant-consonant-Vowel</li> <li>● Divided between the two consonants.</li> <li>● Do not split digraphs</li> </ul>	<p>napkin (nap/kin)</p> <p>picnic (pic/nic)</p> <p>rocket (rock/et)</p>
V*CV or VC*V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vowel-consonant-vowel</li> <li>● Sometimes divided after 1st vowel                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If not, divide after the consonant</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Determining where to divide will help determine the long or short vowel sound of a word.</li> </ul>	<p>open (o/pen)</p> <p>cabin (cab/in)</p>
VC*CCV or VCC*CV or VCCC*V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vowel- consonant-consonant-consonant-vowel</li> <li>● Allows digraphs to stay cohesive</li> <li>● Can be divided:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ after the first consonant</li> <li>○ After the second or third consonant</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>hundred (hun/dred)</p> <p>pumpkin (pump/kin)</p>



## Uncommon Syllable Patterns

Pattern	Description	Example
VCCCCV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically compound words that are obvious where to divide</li> <li>Sometimes three consonants must stay together in the second syllable</li> </ul>	statement (state/ment)  construct (con/struct)
VV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-sound vowel team</li> <li>Sometimes division between the vowels is needed</li> <li>More common in words with 3 or more syllables</li> </ul>	lion (li/on)  piano (pi/an/o)



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