

Lose the Rules! Multi-Syllable Words Made Easy

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Our Objectives

- For participants to understand the importance of:
 - Learning to hear, blend and segment syllables before learning to read or spell multi-syllable words.
 - Reading single-syllable words accurately before teaching techniques for reading multi-syllable words.
- To introduce participants to new techniques to help students read and spell unfamiliar long words.

What Do We Find Being Taught about Syllables in Many Classrooms?

Syllabication Rules: Focus on Consonants

- Break syllables between two consonants that are the same.

rab bit ten nis cot tage

- When two consonants are together, break between the consonants.

bar gain vel vet con ceal

- Keep blends and consonant digraphs together.

sub sti tute ath le tic

But what about gastral? gast ral or gas tral?

Syllable Types

inhabit
 distribute
 microscopic
 insurgent
 squeamish

Syllabication Rules: VCV

- When 2 vowels are separated by one consonant, divide the word after the first vowel and before the consonant
 - V / CV: the first vowel is in an open syllable and is long
si lent e vict pho to
- If the first try doesn't work, divide after the consonant and before the second vowel.
 - VC / V: the first vowel is in a closed syllable and is short
rob in van ish ex act

VCCVVCVVCV...

Syllable Division Patterns

PATTERN	VARIATION	EXAMPLE
VCCV	vc cv	nepkin
	vc cv'	inject
	v cav'	respect
	v ccv	April
VCV	v cv	baby
	vc v	river
	v cv'	erase
VCCVCCV	vc cvc cv	important
VCCCV	vc cvc'	explain
	vc cav'	emblem
	vcc cv	pumpkin
	v v	diet
VV	vc v'	create
	vc v	cameo

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What Does Readsters Recommend for Teaching Students To Read Words with More Than One Syllable?

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Xavier, grade 3, will be our guide for learning about how to teach attacking reading multi-syllable words

The videos are available in a series called *Looking at Reading Interventions* on the Reading Rockets website: <https://www.readingrockets.org/shows/reading-interventions>
Select Episode 6

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Critical Skills before Teaching Reading and Spelling of Multi-Syllable Words

- Students need to demonstrate they know what a syllable is by saying words and orally breaking them into syllables
- Students need to be able to read one-syllable words with the spelling patterns in the multi-syllable word

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Single-syllable to Multi-Syllable

- Always make certain that students can read or spell real and nonsense *single-syllable* words accurately before teaching students to read or spell multi-syllable words.
- They need to be able to read *ab* and *scnd*... before reading the unfamiliar word *abscond*.

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Importance of Being Able To Read One-Syllable Nonsense Words

ad (mon) (ish) = admonish

All three syllables have short vowels.

Two of the syllables are nonsense words.

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Teach Students to Read Words Systematically

After students master reading one-syllable words with a spelling pattern, they are ready for multi-syllable words with all patterns they know.

Examples of Spelling Patterns to Introduce Systematically

Short Vowel Pattern (closed syllables)

- One vowel before one or more consonants spells the short sound (at, best, shrimp, toss, spun) batman, bathtub, velvet, catatonic, Wisconsin, appendix

R-controlled Vowels

- One vowel before an r-spell spells an r-controlled sound (car, her, first, turn, fort) market, cortex, organ, armpit, carton, carnival, compartment, insurgent

Long Vowels (3 spelling patterns)

- **Open syllables** – One vowel at the end of the syllable spells the long sound (go, me, shy, fly) recant, prevent, beyond, matrix, succulent, utensil, humanistic
- **Silent e** – Two vowels (v-e) with a consonant between them spell the long vowel sound of the first vowel (lace, eve, slime, code, cute) shipmate, immune, pulsate, decade, infantile
- **Vowel teams** - More than one letter spells the long vowel sound (pay, raid, bead, feet, pie, sigh, boat, toe, snow, dough, cue) repeat, chimpanzee, lackadaisical, although, venue

Other Vowels

- More than one letter spells a vowel sound (shout, down, toy, coin, boat, new, fluke, cook) poison, boomerang, acoustic, misconstrue, misunderstood, asteroid, deployment

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The Key to Reading Unfamiliar Multi-Syllable Words: Look for the Vowels!!!

We teach students the following about vowels:

- Every spoken syllable has a vowel sound
- Almost every written syllable has one or more letters that spell the vowel sound
- Vowel letter basics:
 - **a e i o u** are almost always vowels
 - **y** is always a vowel at the end of a word
 - **u** is not a vowel when it is after the letter **q**.

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Questions To Help Students Read Multi-Syllable Words

1. How many vowel letters in the word?
 - Students show answer with fingers
2. Are they together or apart?
 - Students put plans together for “together” or separate hands for “apart”
3. Is there a silent e at the end?
 - Students give thumbs up or down
4. How many syllables in the word?
 - Students show answer with fingers

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Reading Multi-Syllable Words with Short Vowels

(e.g., bathtub, napkin, fantastic, establishment)

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Questions To Help Students Read Multi-Syllable Words at the Short Vowel Stage

1. Ask these 3 questions because the students don't know about silent e yet.
 - How many vowels letters?
 - Are they together or apart?
 - How many syllables in the word?
2. Optional: Do you see a silent e at the end?

If older students know about silent e, you can add the question about silent e, even though none of the words has a silent e.

 - This gets the students in the habit of looking for the silent e.

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Typical Rules for Syllables Do Not Apply

- Any way of breaking the syllables that will get to the pronunciation works.
- “Admonish” might be broken these ways:
 1. **ad mon ish** (The “syllable rule” way)
 2. **ad mo nish** (The more typical oral way)
 - Because the student only has been taught short vowels, the ‘o’ will probably be read with a *short vowel* sound.
 - If the student reads the middle syllable with a *long vowel* sound, tell him to “flex” the ‘o’ to a short o.
- **adm o nish** will NOT work
 - Because in English, the letters ‘dm, are never together in a syllable, and they are never pronounced as a blend. The /d/ and the /m/ are always separate sounds in separate syllables.

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Rules You Might Teach

- Break between two consonants that are the same, and only pronounce the consonant once.

rab bit ten nis ad dress slug gish

- Keep digraphs together

ac com plish ment graph ic (or gra phic)

Most of the time . . . shep herd

If Necessary, Help the Student Break the Word So Each Syllable Can Be Pronounced

1. If the student writes: adm o nish
 - Point out that the syllable 'adm' isn't easy to pronounce, and have the student move the 'm' to the middle syllable.
(Most students have an innate sense of syllable division, although a few don't.)
2. If the student writes: admon ish
 - Remind student that when three vowels are apart, there will be three syllables.
3. If the student writes: ad moni sh
 - Remind student that every syllable has a vowel.

I'll demonstrate with establish

The student reads 'esteem' because that was a vocabulary word.

1. Ask: How many vowels do you see? (3) Use fingers to show.
2. Ask: Are the vowels together or apart? (apart) Show hands apart.
3. Ask: How many syllables? (3) Use fingers to show.
4. Students draw a line for each syllable. (3 lines) ___ ___ ___
 - If the student draws the incorrect number of lines, ask the student to count the vowels again.
5. Students write one syllable on each line. es tab lish
 - If necessary, teacher guides student to correct syllables with questions and suggestions.
6. Students read each syllable individually, out-of-order.
7. Students read each syllable individually in order, then blend them into a word.

The Steps on the Previous Slide Are a Starting Point

- Start with all the steps (asking about vowels, having students read each syllable out of order, etc.)
- After a few times using all – or most of – the steps, have students break words into syllables without any help.
 - Correct a student's syllable division only if necessary:
 - If a student breaks a word adm – on – ish, explain that dm cannot be pronounced at the end of a syllable, and we need to move the m to the next syllable"
 - If a student break a word admo – nish, ask if every syllable has only one vowel and let the student self-correct by moving the letters so that it has three syllables.

inhabit

1. How many vowel letters?
 - Raise fingers to show me.
2. Together or apart?
 - Put hands apart to show me the vowels are apart.
3. How many syllables?
 - Use fingers to show me.
4. Draw lines. ___ ___ ___
5. Write syllables. in hab it or in ha bit
6. Read each syllable out of order.
7. Read each syllable in order.
8. Read whole word.

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Schwa



Schwa: ə The Most Common Sound in English

- Schwa is important for reading and spelling multi-syllable words, especially for struggling readers or spellers.
- Most words with two or more syllables have a schwa sound.

We Do



More Words with Schwa - /ə/

- along
 - the **a** spells schwa, not short a or long a
- problem
 - the **e** spells schwa, not short e or long e
- rapid
 - the **i** spells schwa, not short i or long i
- dragon
 - the **o** spells schwa, not short o or long o
- 'U' spelling schwa is not a problem. (Wonderful)

To Request Lesson Plan for Teaching Schwa

- Email michael@readsters.com and ask for the Schwa Lesson Plan packet.

Content Area Words with Short Vowels MATH (some with schwa)

element	connect	octagon	input
expand	random	octagonal	maximum
extend	problem	pentagon	minimum
model	subset	solid	profit
product	subtract	constant	axis
statistic	gallon	complex	limit
hexagon	metric	convex	compliment
hexagonal	segment	mathematics	construct

Content Area Words with Short Vowels SOCIAL STUDIES (some with schwa)

cabinet	radical	political	elastic
citizen	rebel	propaganda	ethnic
civil	republic	protestant	fossil
abolish	republican	public	investment
annex	democrat	misconduct	product
assassin	democratic	element	dissent
capitalism	scandal	conflict	politics
amendment	pacifist	custom	central

Content Area Words with Short Vowels GEOGRAPHY (some with schwa)

capital	tropical
capitol	subtropical
canyon	tundra
continent	Volcanic
ethnic	canal
fossil	continental
grasslands	inland
planet	peninsula
delta	savanna

Content Area Words with Short Vowels SCIENCE (some with schwa)

abdomen	habitat	sediment	fungus
adapt	infect	skeleton	gamma
constant	insect	tendon	Kelvin
contract	magnet	combust	kinetic
convex	mammal	conduct	ligament
expand	piston	distill	magma
filament	pollen	elemental	magnetic
fossil	retina	electron	malignant
funnel	sediment	electronic	meniscus
habitat	skeleton	fulcrum	metabolism



Flexing Vowel Sounds

Schwa Can Help with Pronouncing Unfamiliar Words

1. The student reads “petition” as
pea’ – tĩ – shun
2. You say: *You decoded it correctly. Flex the ‘e’ to schwa.*
3. Student says:
puh – tĩ – shun
4. You say: *Yes, everyone point to and read “petition”.*

Teach Students to “Flex”

Teach students to try different vowel sounds

- If c**õ**m m**õ**n, doesn’t work, “flex” the second vowel to a schwa.
- If **ã** void, doesn’t work, flex the first vowel to a schwa.

What are the two different pronunciations? Where is the schwa?

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. record
r ẽ cerd - noun
r ə cord - verb | 3. conduct
c õ n duct - noun
c ə n duct - verb |
| 2. present
pr ẽ z ə nt - noun
pr ə z ə nt - verb | 4. convert
c õ n vert - noun
c ə n vert - verb |

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Reading Multi-syllable Words with Silent E

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Teaching Multi-syllable Words with Silent E

Add one new question to help the student chunk the syllables around vowels.

1. How many vowels?
2. Are they together or apart?
3. Do you see a silent e?
 - The silent e will belong with another vowel in a syllable.
 - Show thumb up for yes, thumb down for no.
4. How many syllables?

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complicate

1. How many vowel letters?
 - Raise fingers to show me. (4)
2. Together or apart?
 - Put hands apart to show me the vowels are apart. (apart)
3. Do you see silent -e?
 - Show. (thumb up)
4. How many syllables?
 - Use fingers to show me. (3)
5. Draw lines.
6. Write syllables.
7. Read each syllable.
8. Read whole word.

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Usually, VCE spellings are at the end of a multi-syllable word

Sometimes vce at the end of a multi-syllable word spells a long vowel sound:

replace	antelope
subscribe	demonstrate
exclude	centipede
complete	illustrate
alcove	contribute
capsize	sanitize
lactose	imitate
octane	bellicose

Sometimes vce at the end of a multi-syllable word spells schwa:

palace	opposite
lettuce	populace
terrace	adjective
service	literate
justice	effective
Candice	instinctive
cursive	apprentice
confederate	cowardice

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literate

1. How many vowel letters?
 - Raise fingers to show me. (4)
2. Together or apart?
 - Put hands apart to show me the vowels are apart. (apart)
3. Do you see a silent -e?
 - Show. (thumb up)
4. How many syllables?
 - Use fingers to show me. (3)
5. Draw lines.
6. Write syllables.
7. Read each syllable.
8. Read whole word.

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Most of the time VCE comes at the end of a multi-syllable word, but exceptions exist

- These may look like possible vce words, but they are not because silent e is almost always at the end of a word:

electric	make shift
kinetic	lakefront
calendar	timekeeper
delectable	lamebrain
relevant	blameworthy
selection	wineglass
	bonehead
	polecats
	sideburn
- Compound words are exceptions when a silent e can be in the middle of a word:

timeless
hopeful
amusement
lifeless
bravely
requirement
likeness
falsehood
lonesome
- Base or root words with consonant suffixes are exceptions when a silent e can be in the middle of a word:

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Reading Multi-syllable Words with Vowel Teams

With vowel teams, the second question becomes relevant

1. How many vowels letters?
2. Are they together or apart?
When vowels are together, they usually represent one vowel sound.
3. Do you see silent -e?
4. How many syllables?

clairvoyant

1. How many vowel letters?
- Raise fingers to show me. (4)
2. Together or apart?
- Show with hands. (some together & some apart)
3. Do you see a silent -e?
- Show. (thumb down)
4. How many syllables?
- Use fingers to show me. (3)
5. Draw lines.
6. Write syllables.
7. Read each syllable.
8. Read whole word.

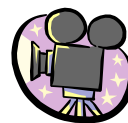
Words Students Can Read

reveal	underneath
increase	disappear
release	leadership
repeat	chimpanzee
prevail	overload
cockroach	disagree
mushroom	bassoonist
approach	discontinue

Spelling Multi-syllable Words

The Power of Understanding How to Use Syllables When Spelling

Matt



This was in 2001 and it was impromptu.

With planning, we would have shown the word and said it, then proceed with the lesson.

When Matt spelled each syllable, he would have said the syllable, then looked at the word to spell the syllable.

Spelling Multi-Syllable Words Starts with Hearing the Syllables

- Many students try to memorize the spelling without paying attention to matching spelling to syllables.
- We need to teach students to spell by syllable so they understand that they do not have to memorize a string of letters.

Two Situations for Helping Students Spell Multi-Syllable Words

1. Teach students to spell specific words
 - **Always show the word first.**
 - Teach students to match oral syllables to written syllables.
2. Answer: “How do I spell _____?”:
 - **Ask the student to say the word, then break it into syllables.**
 - Guide the students to spell each syllable correctly.

Summary of Important Points

Students Need to Know:

- How to orally segment and blend syllables.
- Every syllable has a vowel sound.
- Almost all syllables have one or more vowel letters.
- **a, e, i, o, u** are almost always vowels.
- **y** is always a vowel at the end of a word.
- **u** is not a vowel after **q**.

Reading Multi-Syllable Words

- Students break words into syllables around the vowels in order to read them.
 - *When one vowel is by itself, it will create a syllable; except silent e*
 - *Silent e stays in the syllable with the vowel before it.*
 - *When two vowels are together, they will create a syllable.* (There are exceptions: chaos, violin, etc.)
- If the word doesn't sound right, “flex” the vowels.

Learning to Spell Multi-Syllable Words

1. The teacher shows the word and says it.
2. Teacher guides students to break words into syllables orally and draw a line for each syllable.
3. Teacher guides students to spell the word by syllable on the lines drawn.
 - *Use a heart or other device to draw attention to letters that are difficult to remember.*
4. Students spell the word.

Overview of Steps for Reading A Difficult Multi-Syllable Word

1. Ask: **How many vowels do you see?** Students show number with fingers
Are the vowels together or apart? Students show hands together or apart
Do you see a silent e? Students show thumb up or down
How many syllables? Students show number with fingers
1. Students draw a line for each syllable.
 - If the student draws the incorrect number of lines, ask the student to count the vowels again.
2. Students write one syllable on each line. ad van tage
 - Teacher guides student to correct syllables with questions and suggestions.
3. Call on one student to read each syllable individually, out-of-order.
 - Teacher guides student to correct syllables with questions and suggestions.
4. Call on a different student to read each syllable individually in order, then blend them into a word.
5. Ask all students to read each syllable individually in order, then blend them into a word.

Overview of Steps for Teaching Spelling of a Difficult Multi-Syllable Word

1. Briefly introduce the word

1. Show the word
2. Say the word
3. Have students repeat the word
4. Quickly give a brief definition for unfamiliar words, then have students repeat the word

2. Guide students to orally break word into syllables

3. Draw lines for each syllable

1. Teacher and students draw a line for each syllable
2. Call on several students to say the first, last, second, etc. syllable as you point to the line.
3. Point to each line and have all students say each syllable, then say the word.

4. Students spell each syllable orally while teacher writes spelling on the board

1. Show the written word.
2. Call on individual students to orally spell each syllable, and teacher writes syllables on the lines on the board.
3. Discuss and mark any tricky spellings while you spell.
4. Students then spell each syllable on lines they have drawn, marking tricky spellings.

5. Students write spellings on each line and mark tricky spellings.

6. Students draw lines and spell each syllable independently, and mark tricky spellings

1. Teacher and students erase or cover spelling before students draw lines and spell words
Suggestions: use a dry erase board, fold paper, write on back of paper, write on different piece of paper
2. All students quietly say the word by syllable and draw a line for each syllable.
3. All students spell each syllable on the lines.
4. All students mark tricky spellings.

7. Students spell the word as a whole word.

1. Students erase or cover previous spelling before writing the word

Steps to Learn Reading Multi-syllable Words

1. How many vowel letters?
 - Show with fingers.
2. Together or apart?
 - Show with hands.
3. Do you see a silent -e?
 - Show thumb up or down.
4. How many syllables?
 - Show with fingers.
5. Draw lines.
6. Write syllables on lines.
7. Touch and read each syllable.
8. Trace under and read whole word.

TWO TO FOUR SYLLABLE WORDS WITH SHORT VOWELS & SCHWA

Compound Words

catfish	suntan	shellfish	hotbed	sunbath
batman	cobweb	nutshell	setup	bedpan
sunfish	bath tub	cannot	pitfall	catnap
hatbox	subset	trashcan	shotgun	
bathmat	bellman	gunship	within	
upset	catnip	sunlit	hubcap	

Two Syllable Words

index	album	helmet	profit	unless
mascot	misfit	locket	comic	racket
tennis	limit	packet	radish	happen
napkin	punish	kidnap	banish	polish
publish	relish	witness	exam	tonsil
goblin	habit	campus	picket	punish
picnic	finish	coffin	vanish	hiccup
cactus	panic	hectic	jacket	plastic
combat	edit	enrich	magnet	insist
attic	cabin	metric	basket	unfit
until	solid	talcum	velvet	
public	rocket	vomit	victim	
nutmeg	ticket	credit	candid	

3 syllable words

fantastic	consistent	Atlantic	congressman	
athletic	misconduct	magnetic	craftsmanship	Cadillac
establish	basketball	cosmetic	Wisconsin	thanksgiving
penmanship	inhabit	imprison	volcanic	columnist
investment	astonish	inexact		disinfect

4 syllable words

establishment	calisthenics	accomplishment
inconsistent	anesthetic	disinfectant

Content area words with short vowels and schwa

MATH

connect
 digit
 mathematic
 problem
 subset
 subtract
 nickel
 gallon
 metric
 seven
 common
 compass
 element
 expand
 label
 model
 product
 statistic
 tenth
 hexagon
 octagon
 pentagon
 segment
 solid
 vertex
 width
 constant
 complex
 depth
 extend
 exact
 express
 given
 input
 minimum
 profit
 axis
 random
 subscript
 limit
 compliment

construct
 convex
 hexagonal
 segment
 tangent

SOCIAL STUDIES

cabinet
 citizen
 civil
 abolish
 amendment
 annex
 assassin
 capitalism
 central
 communism*
 conflict
 custom
 dissent
 draft
 elastic
 ethnic
 granges
 fossil
 investment
 product
 pacifist
 politic
 Protestant
 public
 radical
 rebel
 republic
 republican
 democrat
 scandal
 trend

GEOGRAPHY

axis

capital
 canyon
 compass
 continent
 ethnic
 fossil
 grasslands
 planet
 tropical
 vast
 volcanic
 canal
 canyon
 continental
 grid
 inland
 sediment
 silt
 subtropical

SCIENCE

abdomen
 adapt
 constant
 contract
 convex
 expand
 extinct
 filament
 fossil
 funnel
 habitat
 hatch
 infect
 insect
 instinct
 magnet
 mammal
 model
 pollen
 retina
 sediment

skeleton
 solid
 tendon
 combust
 conduct
 connect
 distill
 dominant
 element
 electron
 fulcrum
 fungus
 ingest
 Kelvin
 kinetic
 ligament
 magnetic
 malignant
 meniscus
 metabolism*
 nonmetal
 pistil
 piston
 plasma
 pollen
 solvent
 specific

LITERATURE

almanac
 ballad
 drama
 ethnic
 novel
 occult
 adult
 epic
 contrast
 conflict
 setting
 topic

* The final syllable does not have a vowel letter.

ALL KINDS OF VOWELS

2 syllable words

exclude	convene	acquaint	approach
estate	inscribe	restrain	faucet
decade	canteen	ailment	subdue
compose	toffee	applaud	saucer
incline	trolley	acclaim	
fixate	prevail	ensue	

3 syllable words

valentine	tuxedo	imitate	baloney
distribute	congregate	nominate	dominate
demonstrate	absolute	manicure	committee
recognize	comprehend	duplicate	remainder
incomplete	elastic	halibut	appraisal
isolate	demolish	dominate	revenue
microscope	populate	altitude	autograph
develop	delegate	complicate	authentic
consonant	execute	indicate	flamboyant
stimulate	maximize	absentee	loyalty
romantic	medicate	chimpanzee	

4 syllable words

microscopic	tonsillitis	evaluate
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5 syllable word

hippopotamus

Identify the Letter that Spells Schwa

1. Read the word correctly.
2. Read the word with two short vowel sounds.
3. Circle the letter that spells the schwa sound.
4. Say the name of the letter that spells schwa.

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. signal | 18. tablet |
| 2. model | 19. arrest |
| 3. dragon | 20. spinach |
| 4. attach | 21. along |
| 5. nickel | 22. salad |
| 6. adult | 23. closet |
| 7. ribbon | 24. travel |
| 8. problem | 25. comma |
| 9. children | 26. tunnel |
| 10. gravel | 27. given |
| 11. happen | 28. button |
| 12. planet | 29. extra |
| 13. attack | 30. instant |
| 14. common | 31. lemon |
| 15. distant | 32. panda |
| 16. seven | 33. basket |
| 17. jacket | 34. robin |