

Decoding Multisyllable Words: Roots, Affixes, and Syllable Patterns

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

Long words are easier to read when you split them into syllables and look for parts you already know. Every syllable contains exactly one vowel sound. Greek and Latin roots (like bio = life, graph = write, port = carry, aud = hear, scope = look) appear again and again in grade-5 academic words.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Quick Review: Syllables, Roots, and the Schwa

Two common syllable-division patterns help you decode long words. In the VC/CV pattern (two consonants between two vowels) you split between the consonants: pic-nic, nap-kin, pub-lish. In the V/CV pattern you usually split before the consonant so the first vowel stays long: o-pen, pa-per, ti-ger. Knowing these patterns helps you read words you have never seen.

Many grade-5 words come from Greek or Latin roots. The root bio means life (biography, biology). The root graph means to write (autograph, paragraph). The root port means to carry (transport, portable). The root aud means to hear (audience, audible). Spotting a root unlocks the meaning of a whole family of words.

In long words, one or more vowels are often weak and reduced to the schwa sound — a soft, lazy 'uh.' You hear it in the first vowel of a-bout, the first and last vowels of ba-nan-a, and the second vowel of pen-cil. Schwa syllables are still real syllables; counting them correctly is a key grade-5 decoding skill.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Choose the best answer or write your answer on the line.

1. How many syllables are in the word responsibility?
 - A. four
 - B. five
 - C. six
 - D. seven



2. How many syllables are in the word photographer?
 - A. three
 - B. four
 - C. five
 - D. six
3. How is the word photograph divided into syllables?
 - A. pho-to-graph
 - B. phot-o-graph
 - C. ph-oto-graph
 - D. photo-gr-aph
4. The root bio in biography and biology means...
 - A. earth
 - B. to write
 - C. self
 - D. life
5. The prefix trans- in transport, transfer, and transatlantic means...
 - A. against
 - B. before
 - C. across
 - D. under
6. Which word contains the SAME root as biography?
 - A. autograph
 - B. biscuit
 - C. bicycle
 - D. biology
7. Which word contains the schwa sound (the soft 'uh') in an unstressed syllable?
 - A. fish
 - B. about
 - C. bake
 - D. stop
8. Using the VC/CV syllable pattern, how is the word publish divided?
 - A. pu-blish
 - B. publ-ish
 - C. pub-li-sh
 - D. pub-lish



9. The Latin root aud in audience, audible, and auditorium means...

- A. to hear
- B. to see
- C. to speak
- D. to write

10. Write the word information divided into syllables. Use a hyphen between each syllable.

Answer: _____



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9 A B C D
- 10

Explanations

1. C	Each vowel sound is one syllable: re-spon-si-bil-i-ty (6). A drops both -bil- and -i-; B drops the -i- syllable (a common miscount); D over-counts by treating the final -y as two parts.
2. B	pho-tog-ra-pher = 4 syllables. A drops the -ra- syllable; C over-splits -pher into -ph-er; D adds a non-existent extra syllable.
3. A	Use the V/CV pattern after pho-, then keep the root -graph together: pho-to-graph. B closes the first syllable with -t (changes the vowel sound). C splits the digraph ph, which always stays together. D breaks the root -graph.
4. D	Greek bio = life, so biography = writing about a life and biology = study of life. A is the meaning of geo- (geography). B is the meaning of -graph (the OTHER root inside biography). C is the meaning of auto- (autograph).
5. C	Latin trans- = across, so transport = carry across and transatlantic = across the Atlantic. A is the meaning of anti-; B is the meaning of pre-; D is the meaning of sub-.
6. A	Biography contains the Greek root -graph (to write). Autograph also contains -graph. B and C only happen to begin with the letters bi- and share no root. D shares the prefix bio-, NOT the root -graph the question asks about.
7. B	About is pronounced uh-BOUT — the first 'a' is reduced to a schwa. The other choices are one-syllable words with full short or long vowels, so no syllable is unstressed enough to produce a schwa.
8. D	VC/CV says: split between the two consonants between vowels (b and l), giving pub-lish. A splits before both consonants and changes the vowel sound. B splits after both consonants. C invents an extra syllable; -sh is one sound and stays together.
9. A	Latin aud = to hear, so audience = people who hear, audible = able to be heard. B is the meaning of -vid-/spect-/scope; C is the meaning of -dict-/loq; D is the meaning of -graph-/scrib.
10.	Answer: in-for-ma-tion in-for-ma-tion has four syllables. The suffix -tion is always one syllable and stays together. Splitting it as in-for-mat-ion or in-for-ma-ti-on would break the -tion suffix.

