

UNIT ONE: WORD STRESS

Lesson 01: syllable properties

Definition of syllable

A syllable is a single unit of speech which contains, most of the time, a vowel.

If we have a look at the structural properties of the syllables, we can notice that each syllable consists of a **nucleus** (central peak of sonority). Usually a vowel, and the consonants that cluster before and after the nucleus are called the **onset** and the **coda** respectively.

Syllable structural properties

Syllable parts	Description	Optionality
– Onset	Initial segment of a syllable	Optional
– Nucleus	Central segment of a syllable (core)	Obligatory
– Coda	Closing segment of a syllable	Optional

- The preceding consonants or consonant cluster before the nucleus are called the "onset".
 - The consonants or consonant cluster following the nucleus are called the "coda".
- An English syllable requires a nucleus which is a vowel in most cases, although the consonants [r], syllabic.

Zero onset:

- if the syllable does not contain any consonant before the vowel. E.g.: /ll, on, ask

Zero coda:

- when the syllable has no consonant after the vowel. E.g.: may, fee, strew, tray

N.B.

- A syllable that stands alone is called **monosyllabic**, e.g., horse, train, wide, show
- A word containing more than one syllable is called **polysyllabic**, e.g., carry, deliver, organize, transformation, unwillingly, undoubtedly