# HARD WORDS

## Sound Connections

One of the skills practised on this course is breaking words into **syllables**. For example, 'normal' has two syllables. Say it aloud. Where does the word 'break'? After the vowel sound  or: 'nor mal'. This is a **vc connection** – between a vowel sound and a consonant sound. This is the most natural sound connection between syllables for a native speaker of English. [LINK] For example, it would feel weird and unnatural for us to say: 'norm al' – a cv (consonant to vowel) connection.

There are four possible sound connections between syllables:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **vc** (vowel sound to consonant sound) | e.g. 'my car' | mai Kar | = easy |
| **vv** (vowel sound to vowel sound) | e.g. 'we are' | wii ar | = difficult |
| **cv** (consonant sound to vowel sound) | e.g. 'it is' | it iz | = difficult |
| **cc** (consonant sound to consonant sound) | e.g. 'that book' | that Buuk | = difficult |

vc is the easiest and most natural sound connection for native speakers to pronounce. Think of babies who say *'ba ba ba ba ba ba…'* (**cv syllables** make **vc connections**). We try to replicate these sound connections in our everyday speech. If we cannot, we have to change how we say the syllables to force vc connections.

*Summary of what usually happens with each sound connection:*

- **vc**    OK, easy to pronounce – no change required
- **vv**    Intrusion: we add a consonant sound  w,  y, or  r  to create a vc connection:  wii **y**ar
- **cv**    FCL (final consonant linking): we move forward the consonant sound from the end of the first syllable to become the first sound of the second syllable:  i **t**iz. This usually creates a vc connection; if not, we keep moving consonants forward until we end up with a vowel at the end of the first syllable, e.g. 'most often' = Meu **St**o fn.
- **cc**    We use a variety of techniques to achieve a vc connection: FCL, Assimilation (a sound changes moving forwards), elision (a sound is deleted), glottal stop (a sound, usually  t, is deleted and a glottal stop is added), as in our example:  tha_ Buuk  [LINK]  [LINK]  [LINK]

- **F**    Friendly consonant sounds:  m,  n,  ng,  l. These sounds are 'friendly' with other consonant sounds. If we find one at the end of one syllable, next to another consonant sound, we don't need to change it because it will be easy to say the next sound, e.g. 'confirm' =  kn Ferm.

During this course we are dealing with individual words with between 1-5 syllables. It is easy to break up almost all of the words into vc or F connections. Sound connections come into play more when words meet each other in a sentence, where they are like badly-fitting puzzle pieces. There are two words on this course with which we need to use a **glottal stop** when two consonant sounds meet: 'immediately' (Lesson 3) and 'unfortunately' (Lesson 7). As you can see, both words end with '-ately'. The  t  and  l  sounds meet and, to avoid an awkward clash, we delete 't' and add a glottal stop. Put simply, we cannot pronounce  tl  together comfortably. There is a word in Lesson 6 – 'vegetable' – where we have to use **assimilation** to change the  j  sound to its unvoiced counterpart  ch  as it moves forward:  Ve cht bl. Apart from these words, sound connections should be fairly simple and straightforward on this course. Pronounce each word a few times and decide where the syllables break. Keep in mind that connections must be either vc or F.

However, if you are using the Hard Words process with a different set of words, you may come across one of the other sound connections from time to time: vv, cv, or cc. If you do, this page shows you what to do, and there are other resources available [LINK] [LINK]. In the case of **cv connections** (e.g. 'get up') you can simply make them vc by moving forward the final consonant sound:  Ge Tup. With **vv connections** (e.g. 'ann**oyi**ng') you have to decide which sound fits better:  w,  y, or  r. In this case,  y:  uh Noy **y**ing. With cc connections (e.g. 'football') there are more options to consider. In this case, delete  t  and use a glottal stop:  Fuu_ borl). The more often you do this, the more you will see the patterns repeating, and making sound connections will become an easy task.