

# **The Syllabary**

## **Webster's Spelling Book Method for Teaching Reading and Spelling**

Based on Noah Webster's 1908  
*Elementary Spelling Book*

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# Table No. 1

|    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| bā | bē | bī | bō | bū | bȳ |
| ca | çe | çî | co | cu | çy |
| da | de | dî | do | du | dy |
| fa | fe | fî | fo | fu | fy |
| gā | gē | gī | gō | gū | gȳ |
|    | ġe | ġî |    |    | ġy |

## Table No. 2

|    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| ha | he | hi | ho | hu | hy |
| ja | je | ji | jo | ju | jy |
| ka | ke | ki | ko | ku | ky |
| la | le | li | lo | lu | ly |
| ma | me | mi | mo | mu | my |
| na | ne | ni | no | nu | ny |

# Table No. 3

|    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| pa | pe | pi | po | pu | py |
| ra | re | ri | ro | ru | ry |
| sa | se | si | so | su | sy |
| ta | te | ti | to | tu | ty |
| va | ve | vi | vo | vu | vy |
| wa | we | wi | wo | wu | wy |

# Table No. 4

|    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| ǎb | ěb | ĭb | ǒb | ǔb |
| ac | ec | ic | oc | uc |
| ad | ed | id | od | ud |
| af | ef | if | of | uf |
| ag | eg | ig | og | ug |

# Table No. 5

|    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| aj | ej | ij | oj | uj |
| ak | ek | ik | ok | uk |
| al | el | il | ol | ul |
| am | em | im | om | um |
| an | en | in | on | un |
| ap | ep | ip | op | up |

# Table No. 6

|    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| är | êr | îr | ōr | ûr |
| äs | ēs | īs | ös | ūs |
| at | et | it | ot | ut |
| av | ev | iv | ov | uv |
| ax | ex | ix | ox | ux |
| az | ez | iz | oz | uz |

## Table No. 7

|     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| bla | ble | bli | blo | blu | bly |
| cla | cle | cli | clo | clu | cly |
| fla | fle | fli | flo | flu | fly |
| gla | gle | gli | glo | glu | gly |
| pla | ple | pli | plo | plu | ply |
| sla | sle | sli | slo | slu | sly |

# Table No. 8

|     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| bra | bre | bri | bro | bru | bry |
| cra | cre | cri | cro | cru | cry |
| dra | dre | dri | dro | dru | dry |
| fra | fre | fri | fro | fru | fry |
| gra | gre | gri | gro | gru | gry |
| pra | pre | pri | pro | pru | pry |
| tra | tre | tri | tro | tru | try |
| wra | wre | wri | wro | wru | wry |

# Table No. 9

|     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| tha | the | thi | tho | thu | thy |
| ṭha | ṭhe | ṭhi | ṭho | ṭhu | ṭhy |
| cha | che | chi | cho | chu | chy |
| sha | she | shi | sho | shu | shy |
| pha | phe | phi | pho | phu | phy |

## Table No. 10

|     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| qua | que | qui | quo | qu- | quy |
| spa | spe | spi | spo | spu | spy |
| sta | ste | sti | sto | stu | sty |
| ska | ske | ski | sko | sku | sky |
| sca | sçe | sçi | sco | scu | sçy |
| swa | swe | swi | swo | swu | swy |

## Table No. 11

|      |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| spla | sple | spli | splo | splu | sply  |
| spra | spre | sprī | spro | spru | spry  |
| stra | stre | stri | stro | stru | stry  |
| shra | shre | shri | shro | shru | shry  |
| scra | scre | scri | scro | scru | scry  |
| scla | scle | scli | sclo | sclū | sclly |

## Concerning the Diacritical Marks

Webster first used these current diacritical marks to indicate the precise pronunciation of speech sounds in his 1829 *Elementary Spelling Book*. Before that he had used numbers over the letters to indicate the sounds (phonemes) represented by the letters (graphemes). Unfortunately these marks of pronunciation, although once universally understood, are poorly known by the general population these days, so a little explanation is in order.

Letters with a macron are all long: ā, ē, ī, ō, ū: as in **ā**te, **ē**at, **tī**me, **ō**ld, **ū**se. Vowels are often long at the end of syllables. These are traditionally called open syllables.

Letters with a breve are all short: ă, ě, ĭ, ǒ, ŭ: as in **hă**t, **pĕ**t, **tĭ**n, **pŏ**t, **mŭ**t. Vowels are usually short when they are not at the end of a syllable (when followed by a consonant). These are traditionally called closed syllables.

The letter **c** with a curved line under it, called a cedilla, **ç** is pronounced /s/ like the **c** in city. The universal rule is that **c** followed by **e**, **i** or **y** is pronounced /s/.

The letter **g** with a dot over it (**ġ**) is pronounced as a /j/ as **g** in gem. Sometimes a line is placed over the **g** (**ḡ**) to show that it is hard /g/ as **g** in get.

The so-called r-controlled vowels require special consideration.

ār, êr, îr, ōr, ûr: ār as in **car**, êr as in **her**,  
îr as in **bird**, ōr as in **order**, ûr as in **nurse**.

The **ȳ** is a special use of long **u** after the letter **r** as the **u** in spruce and truth.

Further information on Webster's diacritical marks can be found in his 1908 *Elementary Spelling Book* or older editions of his later dictionaries (but not the popular 1828 edition).

# Note From Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

January 31, 2010

This Syllabary is based on Noah Webster's 1908 *Elementary Spelling Book*. This form of Webster's Spelling Book was first published in 1829. The 1908 edition was the last revision.

I have taken the liberty to make a few minor changes to the Syllabary. Dr. Eugene Roth Jr. has been particularly helpful in making suggestions for the revision. I have not gone as far as Dr. Roth in updating the Syllabary; but my revision, I believe, is a definite enhancement of Webster's excellent Syllabary.

Inspiration for experimenting with *Noah Webster's Spelling Book Method for Teaching Reading and Spelling* came from the work of Miss Geraldine Rodgers. Her essay, "Why Noah Webster's Way Was the Right Way," alerted me to the fact that Dr. Webster's method offered advantages lacking in today's reading and spelling methods. Extensive experimentation in my classroom has convincingly demonstrated the validity of her claims. Students who master the Syllabary and Webster's Spelling Tables and decodable practice sentences are able to make dramatic advances in their reading abilities, including: word identification, oral fluency, silent reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension. Miss Rodgers' essay is available on my web site [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net)

I finally published my typed edition Webster's 1908 *Elementary Spelling Book* under the title, *Webster's Spelling Book Method of Teaching Reading and Spelling for the Twenty-First Century*. You can purchase the book from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) or from your local bookstore.

My coworkers and I have found Webster's way of teaching reading and spelling superior to any currently available. We are excited about the prospect of seeing today's children given the same advantages as children of Webster's day. The charts were prepared in January of 2010 and finally revised and published on March 16, 2014.

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