

The Four Steps for Decoding Multisyllable Words.*

1. Identify beginning and ending word parts.
2. For three part words, identify the vowel or vowels in the rest of the word and identify the root word.
3. Sound out the whole word the slow way and then the fast way.
4. Say the word as a “real” word if parts of the word are irregular.

Initially, this decoding strategy is best taught with a worksheet where the students can use a pencil to circle the word parts during the first two steps. The words can be printed on the worksheet or the student can copy the word from book to a work sheet. In cases where the word parts are common prefixes or suffixes the teacher should discuss the meaning of the word parts. After the word has been decoded, any words not in the student’s oral comprehension vocabulary should be discussed and the student should demonstrate understanding by using the word in a sentence. Give the student both regular and irregular mutisyllable words to provide practice in the application and understanding of step 4.

Remember this is a dissection strategy. For the initial teaching of word parts it is best to start with a root word and add parts. For example add the prefix “un” to “like”. Assembling words from parts is better than dissection in the initial teaching of the role and meaning of prefixes, suffixes and root words.

* A Reading For All Learners teaching strategy.