

OŠPÁYE 2

SYLLABLES

There are three main types of syllables in Dakota; a vowel standing alone, a consonant then vowel combination, or a consonant cluster followed by a vowel. When we need to talk about the structure of syllables abstractly, we will let *C* stand for a consonant and *V* for a vowel; so with this notation we can denote the standard Dakota syllables as *V*, *CV* and *CCV*. Some examples of these syllables occurring as actual Dakota words are *i*, *phá*, and *pšé*; *mouth*, *head*, and *he sneezed*, respectively. Compared to English, Dakota has relatively simple syllables; English allows syllables which vary in complexity all the way from *V* to *CC-CVCCC* (examples of each extreme occur in the sentence *I stretched*, which is phonetically *ay.streht*).

remember, *ph* stands for a single consonant in Dakota, and not a cluster

All vowels may stand alone as a syllable, and in fact many are full words in and of themselves; for example *i*, *mouth* and *a*, *armpit*. Likewise, given any consonant and any vowel, the combination *CV* is a legitimate Dakota syllable; some examples are *pu*, *khi*, *t'a*, *žo*, and *h'aŋ*. However, not all two-consonant combinations can be used in forming a *CCV* syllable. For example, there is no Dakota word using the possible syllable *mta*, nor is there any words involving the possible syllables *šhi*, *ykh*, or *pk'in*. The following is a list of the consonant clusters that do occur. First, those that start with long consonants

sm	sb	sp	sn	sd	st	sk	sč				
šm	šb	šp	šn	šd	št	šk	šč				
ħm	ħb	ħp	ħn	ħd	ħt		ħč				
		kp			kt		kč	ks	kš		
		tk									
					pt		pč	ps	pš		
				bd							
hm			hn	hd							

As can be seen in the table above, the hard consonants and the click consonants do not appear in any of the allowable consonant clusters. There are words which are exceptions to this general rule, but the consonant clusters in them are due to contractions that took place.

for example the word *tkhá* arises as a contraction of *tukhá*

All Dakota syllables contain one and only one vowel. If two consecutive vowels appear in a word, they are separated into two syllables by the insertion of a glottal stop. An example is the Dakota word for language, *iápi*, which is pronounced with a glottal stop between the *i* and *a*, broken into syllables it is *i-a-pi*.

The glottal stop is the intermediary sound in the English expression *uh-oh*

One notable feature of the syllables we have discussed so far is that they all end in vowels. Indeed, the standard syllable templates for Dakota do not allow syllables or words that end in consonants! But, every rule has its exceptions, and there are indeed consonant-final syllables that occur. Some examples are the commonly used words *éd*, *héd*, *déd*, *míš*, *aháš* and *núŋm*.

One class of consonant-final words are the personal pronouns,

míš	níš	íš	uŋkiš
me	you	him/her/it	us

These seem to be basic words which are consonant final, which are very rare. Also words that end in an unaccented *a* drop it in many circumstances, leaving a consonant-final word. One very common example is *máza*, which means *metal*, and is often contracted to *más* when occurring in compound words such as *maswoóhŋake*, or *can*. Some further examples are below.

šiča	káǵa	waš'áka	phéta	ópha	étu
šíd	káǰ	waš'ág	phéd	ób	éd

Notice the change that occurs in the final consonant due to contraction here. Do you see a pattern in types of consonants turn into which other types? This process is discussed more in the chapter *Other Sound Changes*.

Another process producing consonant-final syllables is the contraction of suffixes. Suffixes may contract after being attached to a word, leaving only a consonant to show their existence. Two common ones are the plural marker *pi* and the suffix *hče*, meaning *very* or *truly*.

eyá-pi	wóta-pi	špaŋyá-pi	wašté-hče	tanyán+hče
eyáb	wótab	špaŋyám	wašteǰ	tanyéǰ

SYLLABIFICATION

A Dakota word is usually broken into syllables by grouping each consonant cluster with the following vowel. This produces a word with syllables all of the standard V, CV and CCV forms. In the following, syllable breaks will be shown using hyphens.

i-á	i-štá	uŋ-špá	khé-ya
i-yé	o-k'é	ho-ǵáŋ	hda-tké
tu-wé	ho-kší-daŋ	a-ká-štaŋ	i-č'í-ča-ǵe
tá-ku-daŋ	i-bdá-bde-kte	wo-ma-ya-k'u	wí-uŋ-phi-pi
ó-ma-ki-ya-pi	i-yú-škiŋ-yaŋ	wa-hé-haŋ-yaŋ	ya-ká-ksa-kse

This syllabification process that attaches consonants to their following vowel does not care how the word was formed—for example the word *uŋkáphe*, meaning *you and I hit him*, is formed of the two components *uŋk*, meaning *we* and *aphé*, the verb for *to hit*, but it is syllabified *uŋ-ká-pha-pi* where the affix *uŋk* is split up between the two syllables in order to conform to the pattern mentioned above.

Linguistically, it appears that syllabification occurs after word formation

Consonant-final syllables produce some exceptions to this general syllabification schema. If a certain syllable is made consonant final through

some process or another; that consonant sticks with that syllable even as other aspects of the word are changed. Probably the largest class of such examples are causative verbs, which are formed by attaching the causative suffix *-ya* to the (oftentimes contracted) form of a word. For example, the word *naĥtáka* means *to kick*, and contracts to *naĥtág* before the causative suffix *ya*, forming the word *naĥtágye*, which means *to type something*. This word is syllabified *na-ĥtág-ye*, however violating rule that all consonants appear at the beginning of syllables. This pattern is even preserved during conjugation

na-ĥtág-wa-ye	na-ĥtág-ya-ye	na-ĥtág-uŋ-ya-pi
I typed it.	You typed it.	We typed it.

This is easy to produce correctly in speech for the most part, as syllabifying the words incorrectly (and putting the *g* at the beginning of the following syllable) usually produces consonant clusters like *gw* or *gy*, which are unacceptable in Dakota anyway. The one exception which must be watched out for is when the conjugating pronoun is *uŋ* - in this case it seems as though the correct syllabification would be *na-ĥtá-guŋ-ye*, (or, in the case of the verb *sdodyé*, *sdo-dúŋ-ye*), but in fact the consonant remains tacked onto the end of the previous syllable, where it started leaving us with *na-ĥtág-uŋ-ye* and *sdod-uŋ-ye*. In speech, a glottal stop is inserted at the beginning of the syllable containing *uŋ*, producing a short pause. All other syllables retain their expected form however, even in very long forms of the word, for example, consider the word *na-ĥtág-wi-ĉha-uŋ-ki-ĉi-ĉhi-ya-pi-kte*, or *we will type it for them*.

To make unambiguous the location of a syllable break when it occurs in an unexpected location (such as after a consonant), a colon will be used to mark it. Thus, the examples discussed above will be written as follows

sdod:úŋye	naĥtág:uŋyapi	naĥtág:uŋkiĉiĉhiyapi
You & I know it.	We typed it.	We typed it for them.