

Lesson 2. Rhythm and intonation

2.1. Learning goals

- to be able to say Nuu-chah-nulth words by syllables
- to speak Nuu-chah-nulth with appropriate vowel length and intonation

2.2. Notes on syllables

Words are said in chunks called *syllables*. When you speak to a beat, it is natural to match every syllable to a single beat. That is, syllables are units of rhythm.

Nuu-chah-nulth divides words into syllables a little differently from English. In Nuu-chah-nulth, every syllable begins with one consonant, followed by one vowel. There can be from zero to any number of consonants at the end of a syllable.

∞ **Exercise 1.** These words are divided into syllables by slashes. Say them.

hi/sit	ocean sockeye	maa/maa/ti	bird	ʔa/hiqs	box
ʔuu/q ^w aa	also	xa/?uu/min	pigeon	huuxs/?a/tu	rest

Syllables are units of rhythm, not units of meaning. Compare these breakdowns into meaningful parts (by dashes), and into syllables (by slashes).

(1)	meaningful parts	syllables	translation
	pikčas-ču-ʔak	pik/čas/ču/ʔak	television
	siʔaaq-s.	si/ʔaaqs.	It's me.
	waʔič-u-ʔaʔ-i.	wa/?i/ču/?a/ʔi.	Go to sleep.

If you find a word difficult to say, you might be speaking too fast. Try saying it slowly, syllable by syllable. Follow these steps to find the syllables in a word.

1. Every vowel (*a aa e ee i ii o oo u uu*) is the centre of a syllable.
2. The consonant before each vowel is the beginning of the syllable.
3. Any leftover consonants go at the ends of syllables.

∞ **Exercise 2.** Divide these words into syllables, then say them.

q ^w inii	seagull	mamums	work	ʔaaḥuusʔaḥ	Ahousaht
múksʔi	rock	witwaak	warrior	ʔaʔuuk ^w iʔaḥ	Tla-o-qui-aht
hiyiqstup	everything	ḥaačsiičiʔ	see	máamiiqsu	older sibling
wiikšḥin	okay	ḥímaqsti	spirit	?uyiʔaqʔniš	we will later

2.3. Notes on vowel length

Nuu-chah-nulth vowels can be short or long. Long vowels really are longer than short vowels. However, it can be difficult to pay attention both to vowel length, and to consonants and vowels. Use these steps to develop your ability to do this.

1. Break a word or phrase into syllables.
2. Rewrite the syllables as *longs* (L) and *shorts* (S), according to the length of the vowel in each syllable. Say them as a rhythm of long and short beats.
3. Put the consonants and vowels back into the pattern, keeping the same rhythm.

These are some examples of patterns of longs and shorts. Pronounce each pattern.

(2)	šah/ýu/ti/?aał.	SSSL	Take care.
	łiis/łii/sa/ʔas/či.	LLSSS	Go to school.
	?aa/ni/?iš • ?uu/qum/hi.	LSS • LSS	It sure is nice weather.
	?u/yi/?aqłs • ńaac/sii/čił • suu/tił.	SSS • LLS • LS	I'll see you later.

∞ **Exercise 3.** Say these examples as longs and shorts, then with all their sounds.

tiqpi?aałi!	Get out of bed!
łaa?um?asči.	Go play outside.
šahýuts. ýuuq ^w aak šahýut.	I'm okay. Are you okay too?
hišk ^w ii?ath, ʔaaħuus?ath, ła?uuk ^w i?ath	Hesquiaht, Ahousaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht

2.4. Notes on intonation

Intonation is how the pitch of our voice changes as we speak, from high to low. Nuu-chah-nulth intonation is fairly flat. That is, the difference between the highs and lows in Nuu-chah-nulth is usually smaller than in English.

In English, it is normal for a speaker's voice to go up in pitch at the end of a question. This is represented in writing by the question mark (?). However, Nuu-chah-nulth questions either have a smaller pitch rise in questions, or no rise at all.

The word *haa* 'yes' is said with a long, low intonation, followed by a quick rise.

∞ **Exercise 4.** With a partner, say these sentences with appropriate intonation.

A. suwaaqk. 'Is that you?'	B. haa, siýaaqs. 'Yes, it's me.'
A. šahýutk. 'Are you okay?'	B. haa, šahýuts. 'Yes, I'm okay.'
A. ?u?umhihs ?imčaaþ. 'Can I play?'	B. wik. wa?iču?aałi. 'No. Go to sleep.'