

Lesson 2. Rhythm

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 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.

maa/maat	bird	hi/sit	ocean sockeye	ʔa/ħaqs	box
ʔuu/q ^w aa	also	xaa/ʔu/min	ladder	huuxs/ʔat	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
	načal-ča-čk	na/čal/čačk	television
	siʔaaq-s.	si/ʔaaqs.	It's me.
	waʔič-u-ʔaʔ.	wa/ʔi/ču/ʔaʔ.	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 their syllables.

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

q ^w inii	seagull	mamums	work	čiiqʔisith	Checleseht
m ^u ksya	rock	witwaak	warrior	qaayuuqth	Kyuquot
čimqstup	make happy	naaciičʔ.	see	maamiiqs	older sibling
wiikšah	okay	ħimaqst	spirit	ʔuyaʔqʔniš	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)	su/waaqk.	SL	Is that you?
	?a/na/hi/si • qi/cuwł	SSSS • SS	the little school
	?aa/ni?š • ?uu/qumh.	LS • LS	It sure is nice weather.
	?u/ya?qłs • naa/ciičł • suu/tił.	SS • LL • LS	I'll see you later.

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

tiqpa?ał!	Get out of bed!
łaa?aashč ?imčaa.	Go play outside.
šahỳits. ýuuq ^w aak šahỳit.	I'm okay. Are you okay too?
čiiqłisith, qaaýuukth, ?iihatsath	Checleseht, Kyuquot, and Ehattesah

2.4. Notes on intonation

Intonation is how the pitch of our voice changes as we speak, from high to low. Nuuchah-nulth intonation is fairly flat. That is, the difference between the highs and lows in Nuuchah-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, Nuuchah-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. šahỳitk. 'Are you okay?'	B. haa, šahỳits. 'Yes, I'm okay.'
A. ?u?umhhs ?imčaa. 'Can I play?'	B. wik. wa?iču?ał. 'No. Go to sleep.'