

Silbische Konsonanten

A consonant is considered *syllabic* if it can act simultaneously as a vowel and a consonant. Under certain conditions, the two consonants [l] and [n] become syllabic at the end of a word. Essentially, a syllabic consonant is a consonant that acts as a vowel while preserving its own characteristics as a consonant.

Syllabic consonants follow syllables ending in a consonant. The preceding consonant moves directly into the syllabic consonant. No distinct vowel is heard in the syllabic consonant. Rather the vocalic quality of the syllabic consonant acts as a vowel for its entire syllable.

For example, the “l” sound at the end of the English word “noble” is syllabic. The vocalic quality of the “l” blends with the “b” to form a syllable “bl.” We pronounce the word “noble” not as “no-bull” [ˈnɒbʌl] but rather as “no-bl” [ˈnɒbl] where the “l” has enough of the traits of a vowel so that “l” actually becomes a vowel for the entire syllable.

In another English example, the word “satchel” demonstrates a syllabic “l.” We pronounce the word “satchel” as “sa-chl” [ˈsætʃl] where the “ch” sounds uses the vocalic quality of the “l” to form a syllable (not as “sa-chull”). Also “muzzle” as “muh-zl” [ˈmʌzl] but not as “muh-zull.”

Syllabic consonants are written phonetically with a tiny vertical line drawn under the consonant that contains the vocalic quality: [ŋ̩] [ŋ̩] [ŋ̩] [l̩] One can think of the tiny vertical line as representing a super-reduced schwa sound that is pronounced simultaneously with its consonant.

In many dialects of English, the “n” sound becomes syllabic in such words as “rotten.” A typical pronunciation is “raw-tŋ” [ˈrɒtŋ] rather than “raw-tun” [ˈrɒtən]. The syllabic “n” [ŋ̩] has enough self contained vowel quality that it blends with the preceding “t” to form a syllable without an intervening vowel.

[l̩] silbisches L im Deutschen

p̩	1.	Tempel	[ˈtɛmp̩]
t̩	2.	eitel	[ˈʔaɪt̩]
k̩	3.	heikel	[ˈhɑɪk̩]
b̩	4.	Bibel	[ˈbi:b̩]
d̩	5.	Gesindel	[gəˈzɪnd̩]
g̩	6.	Nagel	[ˈna:g̩]
z̩	7.	Mosel	[ˈmo:z̩]
f̩	8.	Tafel	[ˈta:f̩]
s̩	9.	Kassel	[ˈkas̩]
ʃ̩	10.	Schüssel	[ˈʃys̩]
ʃ̩	11.	Muschel	[ˈmʊʃ̩]
m̩	12.	Trommel	[ˈtʁɔm̩]
n̩	13.	Tunnel	[ˈtʊn̩]
ŋ̩	14.	Engel	[ˈʔɛŋ̩]

In German, The consonant [n] is syllabic in word final position after all consonants except after: r l m n ng . (N becomes syllabic in word final position after all consonants except after liquids and nasals.)

[ŋ] syllabisches N im Deutschen

tŋ	15. leiten	['laɪtŋ]
dŋ	16. reden	['re:dŋ]
vŋ	17. braven	['brɑ:vŋ]
fŋ	18. saufen	['zɑʊfŋ]
sŋ	19. Kissen	['kɪsŋ]
zŋ	20. Rasen	['rɑ:zŋ]
ʃŋ	21. lauschen	['laʊʃŋ]
xŋ	22. lachen	['lɑxŋ]
çŋ	23. kriechen	['kʰi:çŋ]

Be sure to note that N is not syllabic after liquids and nasals: r l m n ng .

[n] N ist *nicht* syllabisch nach den Konsonanten: r l m n ng

ɤən	24. hören	['hø:ɤən]
lən	25. fallen	['falən]
mən	26. Riemen	['ri:mən]
nən	27. scheinen	['ʃɑɪnən]
ŋən	28. bringen	['brɪŋən]

Assimilation of syllabic N in word final position

The consonant [n] is of particular interest in that it also undergoes assimilation in word final position and ends up being pronounced as [m] and [ŋ]. See below.

[n] becomes [ŋ] after [k] and [g] . N moves to a velar pronunciation after velar consonants.

[ŋ] Silbisches N wird zu [ŋ] in Silben mit *-gen* und *-ken* im Wortauslaut.

gən → gŋ	29. sagen	['za:gŋ]
kən → kŋ	30. pflücken	['pflʏkŋ]

[n] becomes [m] after [p] and [b] . N moves to a bilabial pronunciation after bilabial consonants.

[m] Silbisches N wird zu [m] in Silben mit *-ben* und *-pen* im Wortauslaut.

bən → bŋ	31. haben	['ha:bŋ]
pən → pŋ	32. schleppen	['ʃlɛpŋ]