

R-Controlled Syllable Chart

Bossy R Word Lists for ar, er, ir, or, ur — Free Classroom & Homeschool Resource

What is an r-controlled syllable? A syllable where a vowel is followed by the letter r. The r changes the vowel's sound so it's no longer short or long — often called the **“Bossy R.”**

AR as in car

One-syllable words:	car, star, farm, yard, sharp, dark, part, hard, arm, jar, bark, cart
Multisyllabic words:	garden, market, party, target, army, carpet, harvest, artist

- *Teach ar first — the sound is easy to hear and the spelling is consistent.*

OR as in corn

One-syllable words:	corn, fork, storm, short, sport, born, north, torn, horn, sort, port
Multisyllabic words:	forget, popcorn, morning, orbit, orchard, forward, tornado

- *Teach or alongside ar — students find it just as easy to identify and spell.*

ER as in her

One-syllable words:	her, fern, verb, herd, term, perch, germ, clerk, stern, nerve
Multisyllabic words:	person, perfect, mother, winter, letter, summer, teacher, sister

- *Er, ir, and ur make the same sound — teach them together as a group.*

IR as in bird

One-syllable words:	bird, first, shirt, dirt, girl, stir, third, firm, birth, sir
Multisyllabic words:	birthday, thirsty, circus, dirty, thirteen, squirrel

● *There's no way to tell by sound whether a word uses er, ir, or ur — repeated exposure to the specific spelling of each word helps students remember which to use.*

UR as in turn	
One-syllable words:	turn, curb, nurse, burn, hurt, church, purse, curl, burst, surf
Multisyllabic words:	Saturday, surface, turtle, sunburn, purple, furniture

● *Practice ur words alongside er and ir for the strongest results.*

Suggested Teaching Order

1. Start with ar and or — the most distinct and consistent patterns
2. Introduce er, ir, and ur together as a group
3. Use word lists and dictation for repeated practice
4. Practice marking and labeling r-controlled syllables in one-syllable words
5. Move on to multisyllabic words once single-syllable patterns are solid