

How to pronounce the -ed ending

The *-ed* ending in English is used in some adjectives and in the affirmative form of the past simple of regular verbs. It has **three** different pronunciations, **1.** /t/, **2.** /d/, **3.** /ɪd/ but I'm going to recommend you **practice two** of them, so **we can hear your dental ending clearly!**

But first of all: we **NEVER** pronounce the "e" in the "ed" ending:

Are you married? /má-rid/

Why are you worried? /wé-rid/

We played ball on the beach last Sunday. /pléid/

bored - /bór-d/, or as I recommend, /bórT/ (I'm bored is not It's boring!)

We watched a great movie yesterday /wocht/

My mum washed her car yesterday /wosht/

So

never pronounce the "e" in the "ed" ending

AND here is my advice for Elementary students:

always do a strong dental sound at the end of the verb in the past simple, a /t/.

looked (pronunciation in the infinitive: /luk/) – lookT

received (pronunciation in the infinitive: /risív/) – risívT

The Rule and Whys

1. If the **last sound in the infinitive** of the verb is a **voiceless** consonant, the "ed" is pronounced "**t**", as in /lukT/. Why? Because the sound "t" is a **voiceless dental**. They match.

Examples:

stop. The "p" is voiceless. I need to use a voiceless "t"! P-T - stopped - /stopt/

ask. The "k" is voiceless. I need to use a voiceless dental! K-T – asked - /askT/

2. If the **last sound in the infinitive** of the verb is a **vowel** or a **voiced consonant**, the "ed" is pronounced "**d**", as in /risívD/. Why? Because the sound "d" is a **voiced dental**. They match.

Examples:

play. The "ei" is a vowel, so it is voiced, so I need a voiced dental: played = /pleiD/

receive. The "v" sound is the last sound in the infinitive, and it's a voiced sound, so I need a voiced dental: received = /risívD/

But now-- if you say /pleiT/ or /risívT/ you will make sure you pronounce the **dental sound that characterizes the regular verbs in the past simple, affirmative** statements, so everybody will know you are using a past. You see, a lot of beginners have trouble pronouncing a final "d" (a weaker dental sound or /d/), **and then** their verb sounds like a present simple. And this is a problem for communication and in oral exams.

3. If the verb in the **infinitive ends in a dental sound /t/ or /d/**, to avoid assimilation (d or t + t = one t), insert an /ɪ/ sound, this is, **pronounce it as /ɪd/**.

start = start**ed** /stár-tid/
download = download**ed** /dáun-lou-did/

**Touching your throat (well, you neck to feel your throat!)
How can you find out if something is voiced or voiceless?**

All vowels are VOICED. This means our vocal chords vibrate when we say each vowel.

Example:

Say AAAAAAAAAA and touch your throat. Where can you notice the vibration? That is where you have your vocal chords!

About consonants, some are VOICED, some vibrate, and some are VOICELESS. Our vocal chords do not vibrate when we pronounce the SOUND of a voiceless consonant.

Example: Say FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF or P-P-P or K-K-K. Do your chords vibrate? No! Because “f” and “p” and “k” are examples of voiceless consonants.

How do you pronounce the past of “play”? played = cross out the “e” and then you can say /pleiD/. But remember my advice. If your “d” doesn’t sound strong enough, people will think you are speaking in the present, so DO A “T”, /pléiT/. It’s OK. (Yes!, like “plate”, but context will make it clear you are saying a verb, so don’t worry.)

Pronunciation Exercise

1. Block of verbs ending in voiceless consonants

- walk – walked /wokt/
- talk – talked /tokt/
- ask – asked /askt/
- park – parked /parkt/
- bark – barked
- look – looked /lukt/
- book – booked
- like – liked /laikt/
- work – worked /weerkt/
- stop – stopped /stopt/
- type – typed /taipt/
- tap – tapped /tapt/ - when you “type” on small machines

Voiceless Sibilants:

- use – used /iúst/
- miss – missed /mist/
- dance – danced /danst/
- guess – guessed /guest/
- pass – passed /past/
- cross – crossed /crost/
- (get) dressed – (got) /drest/
- relax – relaxed /rilákst/
- watch – watched /wocht/
- match – matched /macht/

wash – washed /washt/
finish – finished /finishT/

2. Verbs ending in a vowel

play – played /pleiD/ - but say /pleiT/
try – tried /traid/ - but say /traiT/
cry – cried /kraid/ - but say /krait/
pay – paid /peiD/ - but say /peiT/
study – studied /stádiD/ - but say /stá-dit/

2. Verbs ending in a voiced consonant – but I recommend you do a T anyway!

rain – rained – but say /reintT/
phone – phoned – but say /fount/
listen – listened – but say /lísntT/
arrive – arrived – but say /aráivT/
receive – received – but say /risívT/
drive – drove /draivD/ - but say /drivT/
live – lived /livD/ - but say /livT/
love – loved /lovD/ - but say /lovT/
travel – traveled/travelled /trávlD/ - but say /trávlT/
call – called /kold/ - but say /koltT/
change – changed (voiced sibilants)
remember – remembered /rimémberD/ - but say /rimémberT/
People mispronounce “tired” – This is an adjective ending in “ed”, yes.
tired - /táie-r-d/ or as I recommend, /táierT/.
bored - /bór-d/, or as I recommend, /bórT/ (I’m bored is not It’s boring!)

3. Verbs ending in a dental – add /Id/

want – wanted /wóntid/
start – started /stár-tid/
paint – painted / paintid/
text – texted /tékstid/
download – downloaded /dáun-lou-did/
need – needed /nídid/
end – ended /éndid/

Finally remember the past of HAVE is **HAD** – Try to practice saying the D this time!

I **had an** orange bike when I was a little girl. /hádn/

We **had ice-cream** for dessert! /ha-dais-Krim/

We **had** lunch at three

We **had a** drink on the beach /hade-drink/