

# How to Pronounce -ed Endings

## The 3 different ways to pronounce -ed endings in English

The past simple form and past participle of regular verbs end in -ed in English. There are also many adjectives that end in -ed.

The -ed ending has three different pronunciations. Luckily, there are rules to help us know which pronunciation is correct!

### 1. /ɪd/, /əd/ → use after /d/ or /t/

We use /ɪd/ (or /əd/) after verbs whose base form end in a /d/ sound or a /t/ sound.

! These words do not necessarily end in the letters **D** or **T**. The important thing is the sound. For example, "decide" ends in -e. However, the pronunciation is /dɪ'saɪd/, so it ends in /d/. Similarly, "create" ends in -e, but the pronunciation is /kri'eɪt/, so the final sound is /t/.

If we add an -ed or a -d to these words, we pronounce the final syllable as /ɪd/ (or /əd/). There is an extra syllable.

For example:

- need → needed  
/ni:d/    /'ni:ɪd/
- decide → decided  
/dɪ'saɪd/    /dɪ'saɪ.ɪd/
- wait → waited  
/weɪt/    /weɪ.tɪd/
- create → created  
/kri'eɪt/    /kri'eɪ.tɪd/

Note: In dictionaries, it usually says that these words end in /ɪd/. However, many native speakers actually pronounce these -ed endings as /əd/ (yes, with a schwa). So, for example, instead of saying /'ni:ɪd/, they say /'ni:dəd/. Many North Americans and Australians use this pronunciation. Both versions are correct.

Here are some more examples of words that end in /ɪd/ (or /əd/):

- grade → graded
- land → landed
- add → added
- pretend → pretended
- taste → tasted
- heat → heated
- visit → visited
- shout → shouted

Another small pronunciation point...

In American English, if you add an -ed to a word that ends in /t/, that /t/ transforms into a flap T, which looks like this in phonetic transcription: /ɾ/. (It is essentially a soft /d/ sound.) For example, in American English, "heated" is pronounced /'hi:tɾ/ (or /'hi:təd/).

## 2. /d/ → use after voiced sounds

The -ed ending can also be pronounced as /d/. This is similar to the previous ending, but there is no /ɪ/ or /ə/. In other words, there is no extra syllable.

This is for verbs that end in a voiced consonant (apart from /d/) or a vowel sound.

A **voiced consonant** is when there is vibration in your voice box. If you put your hand on your throat, you can feel it. For example, /d/ is a voiced consonant.

Another voiced consonant is /b/. A verb that ends in /b/ is "grab" (/græb/). With the -ed ending, this becomes "grabbed" (/græbd/). In other words, we do not say "grabb-ed", we say "grabbd".

**Vowel sounds are also voiced.**

💡 Simple tip: If the end of a verb is voiced, the -ed ending is pronounced /d/, which is also voiced. **Voiced goes with voiced.**

Here are some other examples of verbs that end in **voiced consonants**:

- /dʒ/  
manage → managed  
*/ˈmæn.ɪdʒ/    /ˈmæn.ɪdʒd/*
- /g/  
hug → hugged  
*/hʌg/    /hʌgd/*
- /v/  
arrive → arrived  
*/əˈraɪv/    /əˈraɪvd/*
- /ð/  
breathe → breathed  
*/briːð/    /briːðd/*
- /z/  
sneeze → sneezed  
*/sniːz/    /sniːzd/*
- /m/  
dream → dreamed  
*/driːm/    /driːmd/*
- /n/  
clean → cleaned  
*/kliːn/    /kliːnd/*
- /ŋ/  
bang → banged  
*/bæŋ/    /bæŋd/*
- /l/  
pull → pulled  
*/pʊl/    /pʊld/*

Here are some examples of verbs that end in vowel sounds:

- lie → lied  
/laɪ/ /laɪd/
- play → played  
/pleɪ/ /pleɪd/
- enjoy → enjoyed  
/ɪn'dʒɔɪ/ /ɪn'dʒɔɪd/

Another voiced consonant is /r/. Let's compare American and British English for a verb that ends in /r/.

In American English, "cover" is pronounced /'kʌv.ər/. There is a /r/ at the end. "Covered" is pronounced /'kʌv.əd/.

In British English, "cover" is usually pronounced /'kʌv.ə/. The letter R is not pronounced and there is a vowel sound (/ə/) at the end. "Covered" is pronounced /'kʌv.əd/.

In other words, the ending is the same in American and British English. Whether there is a /r/ or a vowel sound, the -ed is pronounced /d/.

### 3. /t/ → use after unvoiced sounds

Finally, -ed can be pronounced /t/.

This rule is very simple. -ed is pronounced /t/ after verbs that end in an unvoiced consonant (apart from /t/). There is no extra syllable.

An **unvoiced consonant** is when there is no vibration in the voice box. For example, /t/ is an unvoiced consonant.

💡 Simple tip: If the end of a verb is unvoiced, the -ed ending is pronounced /t/, which is also unvoiced. **Unvoiced goes with unvoiced.**

Here are some other examples of verbs that end in **voiced consonants**:

- /p/  
help → helped  
*/help/    /helpt/*
- /tʃ/  
watch → watched  
*/wɒtʃ/    /wɒtʃt/*  
(US: */wɑ:tʃ/, /wɑ:tʃt/*)
- /k/  
like → liked  
*/laɪk/    /laɪkt/*
- /f/  
laugh → laughed  
*/lɑ:f/    /lɑ:ft/*  
(US: */læf/, /læft/*)
- /s/  
dance → danced  
*/dɑ:ns/    /dɑ:nst/*  
(US: */dæns/, /dænst/*)
- /ʃ/  
wish → wished  
*/wɪʃ/    /wɪʃt/*

## Summary

- Verb ends in a **/t/ or /d/ sound** → **/ɪd/ or /əd/** (extra syllable)
- Verb ends in a **voiced sound** → **/d/**
- Verb ends in an **unvoiced sound** → **/t/**

# Useful pronunciation tips

1.

**The most important rule out of these three is really the first one.**

In other words, you only pronounce the E in -ed if the word ends in /d/ or /t/, like in "needed" and "visited".

**If you mix up the other two rules, it does not really matter.**

Yes, if you want to speak very correct English with perfect pronunciation, it is something that you should pay attention to. But in reality, most people will not notice.

For example, for the verb "arrive", if you say /ə'raɪvt/ instead of /ə'raɪvd/, many people will not notice, especially if it is in the middle of a sentence.

However, people WILL hear a difference if you say /ə'raɪ.vɪd/ ("arriv-ed").

In summary, only pronounce -ed as /ɪd/ or /əd/ if the verb ends in a /t/ sound or a /d/ sound.

2.

Here is a tip if you find it difficult to pronounce words like "arrived" and "watched" correctly. (In other words, if you keep pronouncing the E and you say "arriv-ed" and "watch-ed".)

Try saying "arrive do". Then say it a bit faster: arrivedo, arrivedo. Then try to say it without the O. You can try this with any word in which the -ed is pronounced /d/.

If the last sound is a /t/ like in "watched", try saying "watch to". Again, try saying it a bit faster: watchto, watchto. Then try to say it without the O.

# Exceptions

There are a few exceptions to these rules. These concern some adjectives that have an -ed ending. If an adjective ends in -ed, most of the time the rules outlined above apply.

For example:

- disappointed  
/ˌdɪs.əˈpɔɪntɪd/
- bored  
/bɔːd/
- astonished  
/əˈstɒn.ɪʃt/

But there are a few exceptions.

Here are some that you might know already. In these words, we pronounce -ed as /ɪd/ or /əd/, even though the previous sound is not /d/ or /t/:

- naked  
/ˈneɪ.kɪd/  
(It is not /ˈneɪkɪd/.)
- sacred  
/ˈseɪ.krɪd/
- wicked  
/ˈwɪk.ɪd/

There are also a couple of words whose meanings change depending on the pronunciation.

This word, for example, can be pronounced two different ways:

- aged  
/eɪdʒd/ OR /ˈeɪ.dʒɪd/

When it is pronounced /eɪdʒd/, it means **of the age of**.

For example: Mike's children are **aged** three and five.

(That means that Mike has one child who is three years old and one child who is five years old.)

When it is pronounced /'eɪ.dʒɪd/, it is a **formal word meaning very old**.

For example: My **aged** grandparents are still able to live independently.

Another example is:

- learned  
/'lɜːnd/ OR /'lɜːnɪd/  
(US: /'lɜːrnd/, /'lɜːr.nɪd/)

When it is pronounced /'lɜːnd/, it means **acquired by learning**.

For example: a **learned** skill; a **learned** behaviour

(These are things that you were not born with. You learnt them during your life.)

When it is pronounced /'lɜːnɪd/, it is a **formal way of saying having a lot of knowledge thanks to study or reading**.

For example: a **learned** professor; a **learned** scholar