

THE THREE SOUNDS OF -ED

A2-B1 | Teens / Adults | Pronunciation Reference

The spelling is **-ed**, but the ending has **three sounds**. Listen to the final sound of the **base verb**, not its final letter.

/t/

After a voiceless sound
(except /t/).

work /k/ → worked /t/

No extra syllable

worked
watched
helped
laughed
walked
stopped
cooked
washed
kissed
finished

/d/

After a voiced sound
(except /d/).

play → played /d/

No extra syllable

played
cleaned
called
lived
opened
loved
listened
enjoyed
stayed
moved

/ɪd/

After /t/ or /d/.

want /t/ → wanted /ɪd/

One extra syllable

wanted
needed
started
decided
visited
waited
ended
invited
painted
landed

SEE THE DIFFERENCE

work → worked: 1 → 1 syllable

play → played: 1 → 1 syllable

want → wanted: 1 → 2 syllables

need → needed: 1 → 2 syllables

SOUND, NOT SPELLING

laugh ends in /f/: laughed ends in /t/.

live ends in /v/: lived ends in /d/.

These rules apply to regular past simple verbs and regular past participles.

Voiced sounds vibrate in your throat; voiceless sounds do not.

Rule reference: BBC Learning English - pronunciation of -ed.