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.

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