

PAST
TENSE
<ED>

MORPHOLOGY

TEACHER RESOURCE



AlbertaRegionalConsortia





What You Need to Know

Please note: This is an overview of information, not a complete guide to everything there is to know about past tense forms in English.

Past tense can be indicated with the morpheme <ed>. There are other ways to indicate past tense in English so we do not say that <ed> is THE past tense suffix. Past tense verbs that do not use <ed> may be classified as “irregular” in some resources, but they can often be explained orthographically and therefore are just another way we represent past tense in English.

One Suffix, Three Phonemes

The grapheme <ed> can be heard as /ed/, /t/, or /d/. When a verb ends in /d/ or /t/, <ed> will be spoken as /ed/. It is important for students to understand that no matter which phoneme is produced, we spell this morpheme <ed>. Spending time mapping words (identifying grapheme/phoneme correspondences) and highlighting this to students is important. Ask students to sort a collection of <base> + <ed> words according to the final sound of each. What patterns do they notice? What do they wonder?

Words with a Final, Non-Syllabic <e>

Base words that end with a final, single, non-syllabic <e> (which sometimes goes by “Magic E”, “Bossy E”, or “Silent E”) usually experience a change (i.e. replace the <e>) when adding a suffix that starts with a vowel. Rather than teaching students to simply “add an <d>” for words that end with a final, single, non-syllabic <e>, it is important to demonstrate this suffixing convention whenever it occurs.

present tense		past tense
rake		raked
rake + ed	→	raked

Words Ending with <y>

<vowel + y> is considered a vowel digraph and is treated as a single unit (or grapheme). As such, we can simply add <ed> to the base.

play + ed → played prey + ed → preyed

If the base ends with <consonant + y> we switch the <y> to <i> before adding <ed>. (This is because when the <y> becomes internal after suffixing, it is usually changed to <i>, unless the suffix also begins with <i>.) For example,

*fry*ⁱ + ed → *fried*
~~*fry*~~ⁱ + ing → **friing*
✓ *fry* + ing → *frying*

Double the Final Consonant

When a base word is a single syllable word that has one vowel and ends with a single consonant (ie CVC words), the final consonant is doubled when adding a vowel suffix (including <ed>).

trap + ed → trapped pop + ed → popped

One of the reasons we double the final consonant of CVC words is so that they are not confused with CVCe words when we are reading (because the primary function of spelling is to communicate meaning).

present tense past tense
hop *hopped*
hope *hoped*
hop^P + ed → *hopped*
~~*hope*~~ + ed → *hoped*

Introducing the Concept

Action!

Introduce (or remind) students that verbs are action words. Ask students to share the actions they might do in a day. If they are struggling to come up with ideas, ask them which actions they might do in certain locations (such as at the pool, park, or farm). Write the actions they suggest in the present tense on the board. For each, ask what the action is if it happened in the past. Once you have a collection of words, build word sums to show how the past tense verbs are formed.

present tense		past tense
write		wrote
walk		walked
shop		shopped
write + {past tense}	→	wrote
walk + ed	→	walked
shop ^P + ed	→	shopped

Let's Read a Book (or Two)

Using a picture book or selection of text is a great way to introduce any morphology concept to students. Select a picture book written in past tense, such as

- Doerrfeld, C. (2018). *The Rabbit Listened*.
- Chung, A. (2018). *Mixed*.
- DiPucchio, K. (2016). *Dragon Was Terrible*.

Alternatively, you can select a text that includes multiple tenses, such as

- Messner, K. (2018). *The Brilliant Deep*.

- Higgins, R.T. (2018). *We Don't Eat Our Classmates*.
- Shea, B. (2013). *Unicorn Thinks He's Pretty Great*.

After you have read the text for enjoyment, reread the text paying particular attention to past tense verbs. Record these on the board. Ask students to individually (or with a partner) write a word sum for each of the words. Which ones use <ed> to form past tense? Which ones do something different to form past tense?

You may wish to select sample sentences from the text and have students rewrite them from past to present tense or vice versa, depending on the text you have selected.

Videos like [this](#) and [this](#) might help reinforce the concept with your students. You can pause during the second viewing to ask students to write the word sums on individual whiteboards or to come up to the board to write the word sum for all to see.

Games and Activities

Write the Word Sum

Students use their individual whiteboards and markers to write the word sum for the past tense verb you have written on the board. Once everyone has written the sum, they can turn the boards to show you or you can ask a student to write their response at the front of the room to share with everyone. Discuss misconceptions and reinforce spelling conventions of why we spell the past tense verb the way we do.

Memory

Write past tense verbs on one index card and the word sums on another. Students turn all cards face-down and play memory, matching the past tense form with its corresponding word sum. To keep the pair, students must read the word sum aloud.

Tune Into Other Past Tense Forms

As mentioned earlier, there are more ways than just <ed> to create the past tense of verbs. Develop an anchor chart or central classroom location to collect these words. Encourage students to look for patterns amongst the collected words. To write word sums for these words, you can use this structure <base> + {past tense} → <past tense form>.

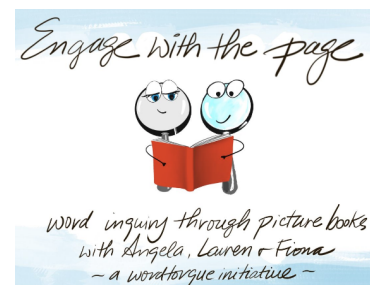
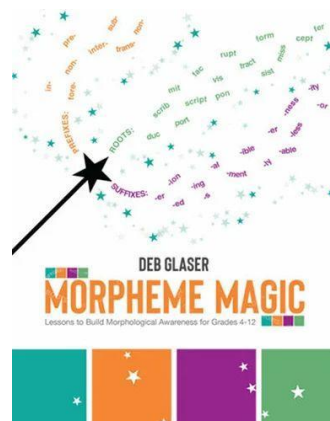
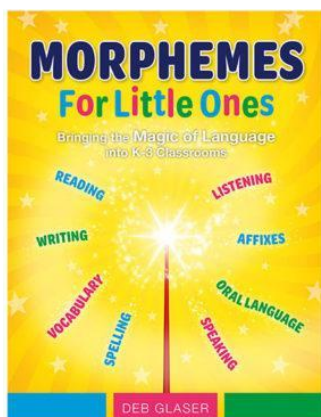
stand + {past tense} → *stood*

grow + {past tense} → *grew*

think + {past tense} → *thought*

go + {past tense} → *went*

Resources



[Engage with the Page](#)

References

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For more information, please contact your local consortia office.

