

The Language Inside Your Brain

(past tense suffix ‘-ed’ saying /əd/)

Lesson Objective

In this lesson, children will continue to explore the results of a famous psycholinguistic experiment by Jean Berko often called ‘The Wug Test’ (Berko, 1958). Children will do some of the actual test items, supported by the teacher.

The test items will target the past tense suffix ‘-ed’ pronounced /əd/, which is typically learnt later in development than the suffix ‘-ed’ pronounced /d/ or /t/. Teachers and speech pathologists can use this lesson to draw children’s attention specifically to the different sounds involved when pronouncing the past tense suffix /əd/. This will be helpful for both typically developing children and children with language delay.

This lesson can be used in conjunction with a **linked lesson about reading and spelling the past tense suffix /əd/**. Instructions for this activity are given after this lesson.

Note: Letter names are referred to using single quotes (e.g., ‘d’), while sounds that letters make are referred to using slant brackets (e.g., /d/). We have avoided using international phonetic symbols for these sounds, choosing instead common English spellings when possible (e.g., /ch/ for the sound at the beginning of ‘cherry’). We do, however, use the symbol schwa /ə/ to represent the English vowel sound that typically occurs in unstressed syllables, because this sound can be spelled in many different ways (e.g., mountain, telephone, again, computer, teacher).

Teacher		Students
Slide 1	<p>Today we are going to talk again about some of the clever things that our brains know how to do for us when we talk.</p> <p>Click to reveal girl’s question: Remember, this girl is asking, “How do I know how to talk?”</p> <p>Click to reveal boy’s exclamation: And this boy is saying, “Let’s find out!”</p>	
Slide 2	<p>We already found out that our brains know a lot about what to do when we want to talk about doing something in the past</p> <p>For example, here are some boys pulling a rope.</p>	

Slide 2 continued	<p>Yesterday, they did the same thing. Yesterday, they ...</p> <p>That's right. Yesterday, they pulled the rope. What sound did we add to 'pull' when they did it yesterday? They pull...</p> <p>Yes, we added /d/. What sound?</p>	<p>pulled the rope</p> <p>/d/</p> <p>/d/</p>
Slide 3	Now look. Here is a baby pushing a cart.	
Slide 3 continued	<p>Yesterday, the baby did the same thing. Yesterday, the baby ...</p> <p>That's right. Yesterday, the baby pushed the cart. What sound did we add to 'push' when the baby did it yesterday? The baby push...</p> <p>Yes, we added /t/. What sound?</p> <p>So our brains know that sometimes we add the sound /d/ to a word and sometimes we add the sound /t/ when we want to talk about doing something in the past.</p> <p>Let's learn about one more thing our brains know when we talk about doing something in the past. To do that, we are going to look at some more funny things we can do. Ready?</p>	<p>pushed the cart</p> <p>/t/</p> <p>/t/</p>
Slide 4	<p>Look, this girl can mot. Can you all say that? She can... mot.</p> <p>What do you have to do to mot?</p> <p>Would you like to mot?</p>	<p>mot</p> <p>individual children respond</p>
Slide 4 continued	<p>Yesterday, this girl did the same thing. Yesterday, she...</p> <p>Note: Children may have difficulty supplying this past tense form. Berko found that 6- to 7-year-old children have still not reliably acquired this rule. They will often say 'mot' for the past tense.</p>	<p>children may say motted or mot</p>
Slide 4 continued	<p>This is a tricky one. I would say, "Yesterday, she motted."</p> <p>What did I say? Let's listen again. Yesterday, she... motted.</p>	<p>motted</p>

	<p>Right. She motted. Emphasise the last sound /əd/ as you say 'motted'.</p> <p>Hmmm, we added some sounds to 'mot' when we wanted to say she did it yesterday. Listen again.</p> <p>Point to the children again as you say: This girl likes to mot. Then say: Yesterday, she motted. What sounds did we add? They mott-/əd/. What sounds?</p> <p>Look amazed. But that's not what we did for 'pushed' and 'pulled'. Act suspicious. Have you ever said the word 'mot' before? Have you ever said the word 'motted' before?</p> <p>But it sounds right when we say 'yesterday, they motted'. That's what we said, right?</p> <p>Wow! Our brains knew what to do, even though we had never heard the word 'mot' before. Amazing!</p>	<p>/əd/</p> <p>no no</p> <p>yes</p>
Slide 5	<p>Now let's look at another funny thing to do. This cat loves to brid. Can you all say that? This cat loves to... brid.</p> <p>What do cats do when they brid?</p> <p>It looks hard to brid!</p>	<p>brid</p> <p>individual children respond</p>
Slide 5 continued	<p>Yesterday, this cat did the same thing. We need to add /əd/ again to talk about it. Yesterday, this cat bridded. Can you say that with me? Yesterday, this cat... bridded.</p> <p>What did you say? Let's listen again. The cat...</p> <p>Oh, right. The cat bridded. Emphasise the last sound /əd/ as you say 'bridded'.</p> <p>We did it again. We added some sounds to 'brid' when we wanted to say the cat did it yesterday.</p> <p>Point to the cat again as you say: This cat loves to brid. Then say: Yesterday, the cat bridded. What sounds did we add? The cat bridd-/əd/. What sounds?</p>	<p>bridded</p> <p>bridded!</p> <p>/əd/</p>

	<p>Act suspicious again. Have you ever said the word 'brid' before? Have you ever said the word 'brided' before?</p> <p>But it sounds right when we say 'yesterday, the cat bridged'. That's what we said, right?</p> <p>Wow! Our brains sure are clever. They know how to say 'brided' even though we had never heard the word 'brid' before.</p>	<p>no no</p> <p>yes</p>
Slide 6	<p>Let's look at one more funny thing to do. This boy is practising how to chelt. Can you all say that? This boy is practising how to... chelt.</p> <p>What do you need to do to chelt?</p> <p>Would you like to chelt?</p> <p>This time, let's see if you can add the sounds on your own. Remember, this boy likes to chelt.</p>	<p>chelt</p> <p>individual children respond</p>
Slide 6 continued	<p>Yesterday he did it too. Yesterday, he...</p> <p>Yes. What did you say? Let's listen again. Yesterday, he...</p> <p>Well done. You did it on your own. Yesterday, he chelted. Emphasise the last sounds /əd/ as you say 'chelted'.</p> <p>Sometimes we add the sounds /əd/ to the end of a word when we want to talk about something happening in the past.</p> <p>This boy chelt-/əd/. What sounds did we add?</p>	<p>chelted</p> <p>chelted!</p> <p>/əd/</p>
Slide 7	<p>Look amazed again. Your brains are so clever! They know that sometimes we choose /t/ for something happening in the past. Point to the baby pushing a cart. The baby... push-/t/ the cart.</p> <p>And sometimes we choose /d/. Point to the boys pulling a rope. The boys... pull-/d/ the rope.</p>	<p>pushed the cart</p> <p>pulled the rope</p>

	<p>And sometimes we choose /əd/. Point to the snowman. The snowman... melt-/əd/.</p> <p>Hold up three fingers. Three different sounds.</p> <p>How do we know which one to choose? Do we have to remember whether it is /t/ or /d/ or /əd/ for every word we ever hear?</p>	melted
Slide 8	<p>Luckily, we DON'T! Our brains have learnt some rules so they know when to use each sound... even for words you have never heard before, like 'mot' and 'brid' and 'chelt'.</p> <p>So, give your brain a little pat and say, "Thank you brain!"</p>	

Notes on English plural rules

Mot/Brid/Chelt: We form the regular past tense of words ending in the sounds /t/ or /d/ by adding /əd/. Hence, the imaginary words 'mot', 'brid' and 'chelt' become 'mot/əd/', 'brid/əd/' and 'chelt/əd/'. This rule is typically learnt later than the rules for adding /t/ or /d/ to a verb to make the past tense form.

Berko, J. (1958). The child's learning of English morphology. *WORD*, 14:2-3, 150-177, doi: 10.1080/00437956.1958.11659661

Past tense suffix '-ed' (saying /əd/) reading and spelling lesson

Lesson Objective

Children work on learning to read and spell the past tense suffix '-ed' saying /əd/ in English.

Teacher		Students
1	<p>Terminology: Past Remember, when we talk about something happening before right now, it is called the past. What is it called?</p>	the past
2	<p>The past form of sneeze is... The past form of smile is... The past form of pull is... What do we call it when we talk about something happening before</p>	sneezed smiled pulled

	right now? The...	past!
3	<p>We've already learnt how to write the past form of a word. We add some letters to the end of the word.</p> <p>What letters do we add? Invite an individual child to respond.</p>	'e' 'd'
4	<p>Yes, we add 'e' 'd'. Everyone, what letters do we add to make the past?</p>	'e' 'd'
5	<p>Terminology: Suffix A letter or letters that we add to the end of a word to change its meaning or the way we use it in a sentence has a special name.</p> <p>Who can remember what it is called? Invite individual child to respond.</p> <p>That's right. It's called a suffix.</p>	a suffix
6	<p>Writing Write the word 'turn' on the board. Read this word with me. Turn. Help children sound out the word if necessary.</p> <p>I turn the door handle. Now I want to say I did that yesterday. Add and underline 'ed': turned<u>ed</u>. Read my new word.</p> <p>I added the suffix 'e' 'd' to make the past form of 'turn'.</p> <p>What sound does the suffix 'e' 'd' make in this word? Turn/d/. Emphasise the sound /d/. What sound?</p>	<p>turn</p> <p>turned</p> <p>/d/</p>
7	<p>Write the word 'help' on the board. Read this word with me. Help. Help children sound out the word if necessary.</p> <p>I help you learn to spell. Now I want to say I did that yesterday. Add and underline 'ed': help<u>ed</u>. Read my new word.</p> <p>I added the suffix 'e' 'd' to make the past form of 'help'.</p> <p>What sound does the suffix 'e' 'd' make in this word? Help/t/. Emphasise the sound /t/. What sound?</p> <p>Sometimes the past suffix makes the sound /d/ and sometimes it makes the sound /t/, but we always write it the same way, 'e' 'd'. How do we write the past suffix? With the letters...</p>	<p>help</p> <p>helped</p> <p>/t/</p> <p>'e' 'd'</p>

8	<p>Today we are going to use the suffix 'e' 'd' to write the past form of some more words. In these words the suffix will make the sounds /əd/. What sounds?</p> <p>Listen. I need a pen. Yesterday, I ... needed a pen.</p> <p>I wait for the bus. Yesterday, I... waited for the bus.</p> <p>What sounds can you hear at the end of 'need/əd/' and 'wait/əd/'? Emphasise the sounds /əd/ as you say the words.</p>	<p>/əd/</p> <p>needed a pen waited for the bus</p> <p>/əd/</p>
9	<p>Write the word 'need' on the board. Read this word with me. Need. Help children sound out the word if necessary.</p> <p>Now I am going to add the letters 'e' 'd' to make 'needed'. Add 'ed' to the word and underline the suffix: need<u>ed</u>.</p> <p>Read the word with me. Needed. What letters did I add?</p> <p>That's right, we still use the suffix 'e' 'd' when the past makes the sound /əd/.</p>	<p>need</p> <p>needed 'e' 'd'</p>
10	<p>Guided practice Write the word 'start' on the board. Read with me. Start. Help children sound out the word if necessary. I should start my homework. Yesterday, I ...</p> <p>What sounds can we hear at the end of 'started'? What letters do we need to add to make the past?</p> <p>That's right. We need to add the suffix 'e' 'd' for the past. Call on a child to add the letters 'e' 'd' in a different colour. Read the new word with me. Started.</p>	<p>start</p> <p>started my homework /əd/ 'e' 'd'</p> <p>started</p>
11	<p>Independent practice Now it's your turn to write some past forms of words using the suffix 'e' 'd'. Students can work in exercise books or on student whiteboards.</p>	

12	<p>Write the word 'lift'. What word? I lift my heavy schoolbag. Ask children to say the sounds (/l/ /i/ /f/ /t/) as they write if necessary.</p>	lift
13	<p>Let's add a suffix to your word to make the past form. Write the letters you need to change 'lift' to 'lifted'. What letters did you add? Show me your work. Check children's work and provide feedback. Read the word with me. Lifted.</p>	<p>children write 'ed' 'e' 'd' lifted</p>
14	<p>Repeat Steps 11-13 with the following words, reducing support when children are ready. Provide a context of use with each word. roast, mend, point, shout</p>	
15	<p>Sometimes the past suffix says /d/ and sometimes it says /t/ and sometimes it says /əd/ but we always write it the same way: 'e' 'd'. How do we write it?</p>	'e' 'd'
16	<p>Throughout the day Point out the past tense suffix '-ed' saying /əd/ in material being read throughout the day. Note: many regular verbs ending in /t/ or /d/ in English double the final consonant (e.g., fit, fitted) or drop the finale 'e' (e.g., wade, waded) when forming the past tense. These forms can still be pointed out when reading for the purpose of noticing the past tense suffix, but the more complex spelling rules will need to be taught separately.</p>	