

THE SOUNDS OF ENGLISH

How to pronounce the spelling 'oo' in English.

The spelling 'oo' is very confusing to learners of English, it can be long /u:/ (food) or short /ʊ/ (good) and occasionally /ʌ/ (blood). It is also pronounced as long /ɔ:/ (poor) **but only when followed by < r >**. So how can a student master these words? The easiest way is as follows:

1. Learn the words that are pronounced /ʊ/:

The following words should be pronounced with /ʊ/, the student should learn these so that they **do not produce a long vowel** when they see them:

book, brook, cook, cookie, foot, good, hood, hook, look, rook, shook, stood, took, understood, whoosh, wood, wooden, wool, woollen

2. Learn the words that are pronounced /ʌ/:

The words 'blood' and 'flood' are pronounced /ʌ/.

3. Nearly all other 'oo' words are pronounced /u:/:

Once a student knows the exceptions, they can be confident when they come across new 'oo' words, as they will all be pronounced /u:/ such as:

balloon, boot, choose, fool, goose, mood, moot, school, scoop, shoot, soon, swoop, tool, zoom

Sometimes this is the best way for a student to learn sounds because some spellings do not come with clear rules. In these cases, the student needs to learn all the exceptions and in this way should feel more confident.

How to pronounce 'se' endings. How do we know whether to use /s/ or /z/?

- Most words ending with 'consonant + se' use /s/.
- Most verbs ending with 'ise' are pronounced with /z/, which is why the spelling 'ize' can sometimes be used instead.
- 'ose' usually uses /z/, whereas 'oose' usually uses /s/.
- 'use' usually uses /z/.
- A few words change pronunciation depending on what type of word it is, e.g. **close /s/ (adjective) and close /z/ (verb)**.

Repeat the following:

Consonant + se /s/: else, tense, corpse, rehearse, finesse

'ise' verbs /z/: apologise, agonise, realise, compromise, prioritise

'ose' /z/: chose, hose, lose, those, whose

'oose' /s/: goose, loose, moose, noose, mongoose

'use' /z/: fuse, confuse, muse, ruse, peruse

Variation: close /s/ (adjective), close /z/ (verb), house /s/ (noun), house /z/ (verb), excuse /s/ (n), excuse /z/ (verb), use /s/ (noun), use /z/ (verb)

-OUGH Spelling. How do you pronounce '-ough'?

- 'ough' can be pronounced with the following sounds: /ɔ:/, /ɒ/, /ʌ/, /əʊ/, /u:/, /ə/ and /aʊ/.

/ɔ:t/ nought, bought, fought, thought, sought

/ɒf/ cough, trough

/ʌf/ rough, enough, tough

/əʊ/ dough, though, although

/u:/ through

/ə/ borough, thorough

/aʊ/ bough, plough, slough

'S' endings. How are 's' endings pronounced?

When we add 's' to a word (root), the following pronunciation rule applies:

- If the root word ends in a voiced consonant or a vowel sound, 's' is pronounced /z/

Example: where's opens, pulls.

- If the root word ends in a voiceless consonant, 's' is pronounced /s/

Example: Kate's, looks, pops

- If the root word ends in /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/, the ending is pronounced /ɪz/

Example: ages, wishes, faces

/z/ dogs, cares, snails, spiders, mushrooms

/s/ cats, creates, smokes, laughs, gasps

/ɪz/ brushes, faces, passes, spaces, witches

How do you know whether to use /θ/ or /ð/?

- All **function words** (prepositions, auxiliaries, articles etc.) are pronounced with /ð/ e.g. < that >
- Most **content words** (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) are pronounced with /θ/ e.g. < path >
 - BUT:
 - if a plural noun ends in < **vowel + ths** > we use /ð/ e.g. < paths >
 - if a verb ends in < **the** > we use /ð/ e.g. < soothe >
 - if a word contains < **ther** > we normally use /ð/ e.g. < brother >
- **Don't worry** if you think that there are too many rules to remember. If you can't decide between /θ/ or /ð/, just try both sounds and your brain will usually recognise the correct one.

/θ/ > thin, think, path, theatre, earth, thing, thought, month, author, birthday, thank, tooth, health, bath, North, third, teeth, mouth, both, South.

/ð/ > the, those, other, father, this, there, although, mother, that, their, clothes, brother, these, they, rather, together.

How are 'ed' endings pronounced?

When we add 'ed' to a word (root), the following pronunciation rule applies:

- If the word ends in a **voiced consonant** or **vowel sound**, 'ed' is pronounced as /d/

Example: opened, pulled, closed, played

- If the word ends in a **voiceless consonant** 'ed' is pronounced as /t/

Example: looked, wished, popped, watched

- If the word ends in 't' or 'd' 'ed' is pronounced as /ɪd/:

Example: expected, ended, started

/d/ showed believed turned renewed received

/t/ brushed cooked produced developed crashed

/ɪd/ created shifted divided united needed

Note:

There are several exceptions to the rules explained above. Each of the following words do not follow the "ed" ending rules. For these words, the "ed" ending is pronounced /ɪd/:

aged blessed crooked dogged learned naked ragged wicked wretched