Walking or Walked? How -ing and -ed Show When Something Happens

Key points

- -ing (happening now) and -ed (already happened) are word endings that show timing.
- You add these endings to action words like jump or walk without changing the main part: 'jump' becomes 'jumping' or 'jumped'.
- 'She's running' means it's happening now; 'She ran' means it already happened—listen for what the words tell you about timing.
- Year 1 children learn these endings by reading, writing and hearing them in everyday speech.
- Some children hear -ed as a separate sound ('walk-ed') while -ing flows smoothly ('walk-ing')—both are fine.
- This is a foundation for learning about verb tenses; the focus right now is on noticing the difference in meaning.

Things to try at home

- Spot actions during the day and use both forms naturally: 'You're building—you're stacking the blocks!' or 'You stacked so many!' Notice the word ending when it feels right.
- Play a two-part game: show a picture or act out an action and ask 'Is this happening now or did it already happen?' Say the sentence together.
- Act out verbs together: call out an action like 'skipping' and skip, or say 'skipped' and freeze in a skipping pose. Let your child choose actions for you to mime.
- Read picture books and pause to notice -ing and -ed words: 'Can you spot the word ending in -ing?' Keep it a friendly observation.
- Make silly sentences using both forms—'I'm hopping, I hopped' or 'The dog is running, the dog ran'—and have fun repeating them.

Find out more

- Ask your child's Year 1 teacher how the school teaches verb endings and what your child is working on.
- Department for Education National Curriculum for English (Year 1 programme of study) on gov.uk.
- Your child's reading book or phonics scheme—the notes for parents explain what -ing and -ed words to listen for.