



A1 Past Simple Explanations

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Past Simple with 'Be'

The verb 'be' is irregular in the past simple. Here is the positive form. There's no short form for the positive.

- I was cold.
- You were tired.
- He was in the garden.
- She was late.
- It was sunny.
- We were on holiday.
- They were hungry.

To make the negative past simple with 'be', just add 'not':

- I was not sleepy.
- You were not on the bus.
- He was not at school.
- She was not beautiful.
- It was not cold.
- We were not at work.
- They were not tired.

We often use short forms for the negative. We change 'not' to 'n't'.

- I wasn't sleepy.
- You weren't on the bus.
- He wasn't at school.
- She wasn't beautiful.
- It wasn't cold.
- We weren't at work.
- They weren't tired.



To make a question, we change the position of 'was / were' and the subject. Here are the past simple 'yes / no' questions with 'be'.

- Was I sleepy?
- Were you late?
- Was he at the cinema?
- Was she kind?
- Was it hot?
- Were we hungry?
- Were they at work?

And to make 'wh' questions with 'be', we put the question word at the beginning.

- Why was I sleepy?
- Where were you?
- When was he at the cinema?
- How was she?
- How was it?
- Why were we hungry?
- When were they at work?



Past Simple Form with Regular Verbs

We usually make the positive past simple by adding ‘-ed’ to the infinitive. For example, ‘play’ becomes ‘played’.

- I walked home.
- You played the piano.
- He cooked dinner.
- She listened to music.
- It rained a lot.
- We laughed all night.
- They missed the train.

We make the negative form with ‘did + not + infinitive’.

- I did not walk home.
- You did not play the piano.
- He did not cook dinner.
- She did not listen to music.
- It did not rain much.
- We did not laugh all night.
- They did not miss the train.

The negative short form uses ‘didn’t’.

- I didn’t walk home.
- You didn’t play the piano.
- He didn’t cook dinner.
- She didn’t listen to music.
- It didn’t rain much.
- We didn’t laugh all night.
- They didn’t miss the train.



For questions, put 'did' before the subject, and the infinitive after it. Here are examples of 'yes / no' questions.

- Did I walk home?
- Did you play the piano?
- Did he cook dinner?
- Did she listen to music?
- Did it rain a lot?
- Did we laugh all night?
- Did they miss the train?

To make a 'wh' question, put the question word at the beginning of the sentence and then 'did'.

- Where did I walk to?
- What did you play?
- What did he cook?
- Why did she listen?
- When did it rain?
- Where did we laugh?
- How did they miss the train?



Past Simple Spelling Changes

Normally, to make the past simple, we add 'ed' to the infinitive. However, if the verb ends in 'e', we only need to add 'd'. There are many verbs like this.

- like → liked
- love → loved
- agree → agreed
- hope → hoped
- believe → believed
- change → changed
- close → closed

If the verb ends in a consonant + 'y', change the 'y' to an 'i' before adding 'ed'.

- study → studied
- copy → copied
- carry → carried
- cry → cried
- dry → dried
- hurry → hurried
- tidy → tidied
- try → tried
- worry → worried

This isn't true for verbs that end in vowel + y.

- enjoy → enjoyed
- stay → stayed
- play → played

Some verbs double the last letter before adding 'ed'.

- plan → planned
- stop → stopped
- prefer → preferred
- drop → dropped
- travel → travelled (in UK English only)



Past Simple Form with Irregular Verbs

We only need to worry about past simple irregular verbs in the positive, because we make negatives and questions with 'did' or 'didn't' + infinitive.

The past simple form is the same for all subjects. It doesn't change for he / she / it. It's always the same word.

Infinitive Form	Past Simple (positive)	Example
Bring	Brought	I brought some cookies.
Buy	Bought	She bought some books.
Come	Came	My sister came to the party.
Do	Did	We did our homework earlier.
Drink	Drank	He drank a lot of coffee at that time.
Eat	Ate	I ate too many biscuits yesterday!
Find	Found	They found some money in the street.
Forget	Forgot	She forgot your birthday.
Get	Got	We got a new car.
Give	Gave	Julie gave her baby a kiss.
Go	Went	The students went to the park.
Have	Had	We had lunch early.
Know	Knew	I knew the answer.
Make	Made	I made coffee for everyone.
Meet	Met	He once met the queen!
Put	Put	They put their phones on the table.
Read	Read (pronounced 'red')	I read a lot last summer.
Say	Said	He said that he was tired.
See	Saw	We saw a good film.
Sleep	Slept	We slept very well.
Take	Took	The journey took a long time.
Tell	Told	He told a story.
Think	Thought	I thought so.
Understand	Understood	We understood the explanation.
Write	Wrote	He wrote more than twenty books in his lifetime.



Past Simple Basic Use

The past simple is the most common past tense. We use it whenever we want to talk about the past and we don't have any special situation that means we should use a different tense. If you're not sure what past tense to use, use the past simple.

We use the past simple to talk about things or situations in the past that are now finished. We often use a finished time word (yesterday, last week, at 2 o'clock, in 2003).

- I went to the cinema yesterday.
- We spent a lot of time in Japan in 2007.
- The Vikings invaded Britain.
- Leonardo painted the Mona Lisa.

If we ask questions about the past using 'when', we usually use the past simple.

- When did you go to Japan?
- When did Leonardo paint the Mona Lisa?