

THE SIMPLE PAST

ACTIVITY TYPE

Reading, Writing, Grammar,
Exercises

LANGUAGE FOCUS

SIMPLE PAST

AIM

To learn and practice how to
form the SIMPLE PAST

LEVEL

Beginner, Elementary

TIME

45 Min

INTRODUCTION

After going through your regular review and teacher talk, tell the students that they're going to learn how to form the SIMPLE PAST in English

PREPARATION

Make one copy of the worksheet for each student

PROCEDURE

Give one copy of the worksheet to each student.

Go through the grammar and exercises together.

WRAPUP

Ask the students if they have any doubts.

Thank them for coming to the lesson.

THE SIMPLE PAST

The *simple past tense* is one of the most common tenses in English. Its form is the same with all subjects. It is usually formed by adding *-ED* to the verb. This page will explain the rules for forming the tense with regular verbs.

Forming the simple past tense

With most verbs, the simple past is created simply by adding *-ED*. However, with some verbs, you need to add *-ES* or change the ending a little. Here are the rules:

Verb ending in...	How to make the simple past	Examples
e	Add <i>-D</i>	<i>live - lived</i> <i>date - dated</i>
Consonant + y	Change y to i, then add <i>-ED</i>	<i>try - tried</i> <i>cry - cried</i>

One vowel + one consonant (but NOT w or y)	Double the consonant, then add -ED	<i>tap - tapped</i> <i>commit -</i> <i>committed</i>
[anything else]	Add -ED	<i>boil - boiled</i> <i>fill - filled</i> <i>hand - handed</i>

The three most important irregular verbs

The three most important irregular verbs are BE, HAVE, and DO. BE is the most difficult, because its forms are different depending on the subject:

Pronoun	Verb
I	was
You	were
He / she / it	was

We

were

They

were

HAVE and DO are more simple:

Base
form

Past
Tense

have

had

do

did

Other irregular verbs

Other irregular verbs fall into three main categories:

Category	Examples
Verbs which don't change	cut ~ cut hit ~ hit fit ~ fit
Verbs which change their vowel	get ~ got sit ~ sat drink ~ drank
Verbs which change completely	catch ~ caught bring ~ brought teach ~ taught

In the simple past tense, negative and question forms are made using the auxiliary verb "do" (in its past form, "did") followed by the simple form of the main verb. This page explains the rules.

Forming a negative

Negatives in the simple present are formed by adding *didn't* (informal) or *did not* (formal) before the simple form of the verb. The verb BE is an exception to this; in the case of BE, we just add *n't* (informal) or *not* (formal) after "was" or "were":

Simple past statement	Informal negative	Formal negative
I had a car.	I didn't have a car.	I did not have a car.
You ate my toast.	You didn't eat my toast.	You did not eat my toast.
He was here yesterday.	He wasn't here yesterday.	He was not here yesterday.
They were in the park.	They weren't in the park.	They were not in the park.

Forming a yes/ no question

Simple past statement	Yes/ no question
He brought his friend.	Did he bring his friend?
They had a party.	Did they have a party?
You were here.	Were you here?
She was sick.	Was she sick?

Yes/ no questions are also created using the auxiliary *did*. This time, the auxiliary is placed before the subject. The verb BE is an exception; in this case, we move BE before the subject. Here are the rules:

Forming a WH- question

WH- questions (using words such as "what", "when", "where" etc.) are also

created by putting the auxiliary *did* before the subject (or moving BE, as explained above). Then, you add the WH- word at the beginning. Here are some examples:

Statement	Yes/no question	WH- question
The building fell down.	Did the building fall down?	Why did the building fall down?
They lived in Vancouver.	Did they live in Vancouver?	Where did they live?
The store was closed.	Was the store closed?	Why was the store closed?
They were wolves.	Were they wolves?	What were they?

Exercises

SIMPLE PAST (TO BE)

EXERCISE 1.

Complete the exercises by inserting the correct form of the verb 'to be'

e.g. When you were ten years old, were you friendly with other children?

1. When he _____ nine years old, _____ he clever?
2. When they _____ young, _____ they friends?
2. When _____ the last time you _____ in Milan?
3. When we _____ young, we _____ very athletic.
4. When she _____ twenty, she _____ very thin.

EXERCISE 2.

Complete the sentences by inserting the correct pronoun.

e.g. When they were young, they were very friendly.

1. When _____ was ten years old, _____ was a good basketball player.
2. When _____ were young, _____ were always happy.
3. When _____ were seventeen, were _____ popular at school?

EXERCISE 3.

Complete the following sentences by answering the questions using either the negative or the positive forms of the verb 'to be'.

1. When you were a child, were you good at playing football?

2. When your mother was young, was she an athletic person?

3. When your friends were children, were they happy?

SIMPLE PAST

EXERCISE 1

Complete the sentences by using the appropriate form of the Simple Past.

1. Where you (go) last night?
2. We (be) very tired, so we (not go) out for dinner.
We (stay) at home and (watch) a movie on TV.
3. Who (be) at the party with Sara last Sunday?
4. When your parents (arrive)?
5. They (arrive) around half past 10 at the central station, then they (take) the metro and (visit) the town centre.
6. 'What (happen) to Julie? She (not be) at school yesterday.' 'Maybe she (have) a cold.'
7. When you (be) a child, where you (live)?
8. your friends (have) a good time in Mexico



- last summer?
9. There (not be) any wine at home, and so my mother (go) to the supermarket to buy a bottle.
 10. Yesterday Peter (not do) his homework and this morning his teacher (be) angry with him.
 11. 'When your parents (be born)?' 'My father (be born) in 1954 and my mother in 1955.'
 12. Poor Michael! His wife (die) last January. It (be) a real shock for him and he (go mad).
 13. When her brother (be) 6 years old, he (be afraid) of the dark.
 14. 'Oh, Gina! What a beautiful dress you're wearing today! When you (buy) it?'
 15. 'Well, I (not buy) it! It (be) a present for my birthday!'
 16. I think William is sick. Last night he (not have) dinner and before going to bed he (take) an aspirin.