

# THE SIMPLE PAST

## ACTIVITY TYPE

Reading, Writing, Grammar,  
Exercises

## LANGUAGE FOCUS

SIMPLE PAST

## AIM

To learn and practice the SIMPLE  
PAST in English

## LEVEL

Beginner, Elementary, Intermediate,

## TIME

60 Minutes

## INTRODUCTION

After going through your regular review and teacher talk, tell the students that they're going to learn 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.

# Simple Past

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## FORM Simple Past

[VERB+ed]

## EXAMPLES:

I visited my friends.

I often visited my friends.

**NOTE:** When you are using a verb tense with only one part such as Simple Past (visited), adverbs usually come before the verb (often visited). Please remember this is different from verbs with more than one part such as Present Continuous.

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## USE 1: Completed Action in the Past



Use the Simple Past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past. Sometimes the speaker may not actually mention the specific time, but they do have one specific time in mind.

## EXAMPLES:

I saw a movie yesterday.

I didn't see a movie yesterday.

Last year, I traveled to Japan.

Last year, I didn't travel to Japan.

She washed her car.

She didn't wash her car.

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## USE 2: A Series of Completed Actions



We use the Simple Past to list a series of completed actions in the past. These actions happen 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th...

## EXAMPLES:

I finished work, walked to the beach, and found a nice place to swim.

He arrived from the airport at 8:00, checked into the hotel at 9:00, and met the others at 10:00.

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## USE 3: Single Duration



The Simple Past can be used with a duration which starts and stops in the past. A duration is a long action often used with expressions like "for two years," "for five minutes," "all day" or "all year."

### EXAMPLES:

I lived in Brazil for two years.

Shauna studied Japanese for five years.

They sat at the beach all day.

We talked on the phone for thirty minutes.

How long did you wait for them?

We waited for one hour.

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## USE 4 Habit in the Past



The Simple Past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past. It can have the same meaning as "used to". To make it clear that we are talking about a habit we often use expressions such as "always," "often,"

"usually," "never," "...when I was a child" or "...when I was younger" in the sentence.

### EXAMPLES:

I studied French when I was a child.

He played the violin.

She worked at the movie theater after school.

They never went to school, they always skipped.

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### IMPORTANT "When clauses" happen first

Clauses are groups of words which have meaning but are not complete sentences. Some clauses begin with the word *when* such as "When I dropped my pen..." or "When class began..." These clauses are called "when clauses" and they are very important. The examples below contain "when clauses."

### EXAMPLES:

When I paid her one dollar, she answered my question.

She answered my question, when I paid her one dollar.

"When clauses" are important because they always happen first when both clauses are in the Simple Past.



## Past Simple: Irregular Verbs

- Many Past Simple verbs are irregular. Study the grammar reference chart below.

Below are 64 commonly used <i>Past Simple</i> irregular verbs in English.			
For example:			
<i>"My friend <b>buys</b> a newspaper every day."</i>			
<i>"My friend <b>bought</b> a newspaper yesterday."</i>			
● be	● was / were	● hit	● hit
● become	● became	● hold	● held
● begin	● began	● hurt	● hurt
● bite	● bit	● keep	● kept
● blow	● blew	● know	● knew
● break	● broke	● leave	● left
● bring	● brought	● lose	● lost
● build	● built	● make	● made
● buy	● bought	● meet	● met
● can	● could	● pay	● paid
● catch	● caught	● put	● put
● choose	● chose	● read	● read
● come	● came	● ride	● rode
● cost	● cost	● run	● ran
● cut	● cut	● say	● said
● do	● did	● see	● saw
● draw	● drew	● sell	● sold
● drink	● drank	● sing	● sang
● drive	● drove	● sit	● sat
● eat	● ate	● spend	● spent
● fall	● fell	● stand	● stood
● feed	● fed	● steal	● stole
● feel	● felt	● swim	● swam
● find	● found	● take	● took
● fly	● flew	● teach	● taught
● forget	● forgot	● tell	● told
● freeze	● froze	● think	● thought
● get	● got	● throw	● threw
● give	● gave	● understand	● understood
● go	● went	● wear	● wore
● have	● had	● win	● won
● hear	● heard	● write	● wrote

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## EXERCISES SIMPLE PAST

Fill in the texts below with the simple past.

### *EARLY MAIL SERVICE IN THE U.S.*



The discovery of gold in California in 1848 \_\_\_\_\_ settlers from the East Coast to the West Coast of the United States. Within a few years, the population of California \_\_\_\_\_ drastically, and settlers \_\_\_\_\_ better mail service from their families and friends in the East. Stage coaches \_\_\_\_\_ the mail, but they \_\_\_\_\_ slow and \_\_\_\_\_ several weeks to reach the West. Ships from New York also \_\_\_\_\_ the mail around South America, but this journey took even longer.

*Word list (a word may be used more than 1 time): be, bring, carry, demand, increase, take*

In 1860, the Pony Express \_\_\_\_\_ to deliver mail across the country. Riders \_\_\_\_\_ St. Joseph, Missouri, on the first part of the journey to California. Men on fast horses \_\_\_\_\_ in relays day and night at top speeds for ten to fifteen miles across the country. A new rider \_\_\_\_\_ ready at each of the nearly two hundred stations along the route. The mail \_\_\_\_\_ two thousand miles away in Sacramento ten days later.

*Word list (a word may be used more than 1 time): arrive, be, begin, leave, ride*

The riders \_\_\_\_\_ day and night. Horses and men \_\_\_\_\_ out quickly, and Pony Express riders frequently \_\_\_\_\_ physical danger when they \_\_\_\_\_ through Indian attacks. Unfortunately, the Pony Express only \_\_\_\_\_ for nineteen months. The government \_\_\_\_\_ to give financial help to the company, and in 1861 the completion of the first transcontinental telegraph line at Salt Lake City, Utah, \_\_\_\_\_ the end of the Pony Express.

*Word list (a word may be used more than 1 time): mark, meet, refuse, ride, wear*



## THE RICHEST MAN IN AMERICA



John Jacob Astor \_\_\_\_\_ his home in Germany and \_\_\_\_\_ in America in 1783 after the American Revolution. He \_\_\_\_\_ the fur-trading business and \_\_\_\_\_ his own fur-gathering expeditions in New York State. By 1800, Astor \_\_\_\_\_ a quarter of a million dollars. In 1808, he \_\_\_\_\_ the American Fur Company and \_\_\_\_\_ his fur-trading business into the Northwest Territory and the Louisiana Territory. Astor also \_\_\_\_\_ the Oriental trade business and \_\_\_\_\_ American furs for Oriental silk, tea, and glassware.

**Word list (a word may be used more than 1 time):** *arrive, enter, extend, form, have, learn, leave, start, trade*

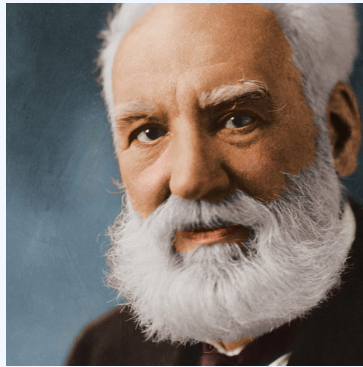
He \_\_\_\_\_ most of his profits from the fur and Oriental trade business in farm lands, and within a few years, he \_\_\_\_\_ a great deal of property in present day New York City. When he \_\_\_\_\_ in 1848, he \_\_\_\_\_ the richest man in America. His real estate

holdings and property rentals \_\_\_\_\_ more than \$20 million.

John Jacob Astor \_\_\_\_\_ much of this money to libraries, universities, and charities across the United States.

**Word list (a word may be used more than 1 time):** *be, donate, die, invest, own, total*

## *ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL: EDUCATOR AND INVENTOR*



Alexander Graham Bell \_\_\_\_\_ an inventor, a scientist, and an educator. He \_\_\_\_\_ the University of Edinburgh and \_\_\_\_\_ for his grandfather, a speech teacher, and his father, a speech teacher and writer. In 1870, he \_\_\_\_\_ to Canada with his parents and \_\_\_\_\_ in Ontario where he \_\_\_\_\_ at several schools for the deaf. He \_\_\_\_\_ a school in Boston in 1872 to train teachers in his method. He \_\_\_\_\_ a professor of speech and vocal physiology at Boston University from 1873 to 1877.

During that time, he \_\_\_\_\_ with a device for transmitting several telegraph messages at once over a single wire and \_\_\_\_\_ his work with the deaf.

**Word list (a word may be used more than 1 time):** *attend, be, continue, experiment, immigrate, settle, start, teach, work*

Later, he \_\_\_\_\_ the principles of the two experiments and \_\_\_\_\_ the basic principle of the telephone. In March 1876, he \_\_\_\_\_ the telephone and \_\_\_\_\_ intelligible words. The money that he \_\_\_\_\_ from his telephone \_\_\_\_\_ his future experiments. He \_\_\_\_\_ the photo-phone, a device to transmit speech along a beam of light, and an electric probe for surgery, a forerunner of the X ray. In the 45 years after the invention of the telephone, Bell \_\_\_\_\_ many years of service to the deaf. In later years, he \_\_\_\_\_ the telephone because it \_\_\_\_\_ his experiments.

**Word list (a word may be used more than 1 time):** *combine, develop, dislike, finance, give, interrupt, invent, patent, receive, transmit*