

Past tenses

30 Past simple: regular verbs

- We use the past simple to talk about:
 - single actions that started and finished in the past, often with definite time expressions like *yesterday, last week, a year ago*: ***I finished college a year ago.***
 - actions that happened regularly in the past, often with expressions of frequency (e.g. *often, always, every week* etc.) or duration (e.g. *for a year, when I was a child*): ***I played football every week when I was a child.***
 - states and situations that were true in the past but are not true now: ***I lived in London when I was young, but now I live in Liverpool.***
- To form the past simple of regular verbs, we add **-ed** to the verb: *walk* → ***walked***
play → ***played*** *like* → ***liked***
- We use ***did/didn't*** + infinitive in negative sentences and questions: ***I didn't like the film. Did you play tennis last Saturday?***

▶▶ See Appendix 6: Spelling rules for verbs + -ed, page 171.

Affirmative		Ann	visited	her friend.
Negative		Ann	didn't visit	her friend.
Question	Did	Ann	visit	her friend?

PRACTICE

30a Complete the sentences. Use the past simple of the verbs in brackets.

- 0 I *watched* a really good film on TV last night. (watch)
- 1 The bus fifteen minutes late yesterday. (arrive)
- 2 My parents much when they were young. (not travel)
- 3 I to my friend for an hour on the phone yesterday. (chat)
- 4 We basketball at primary school. (not play)
- 5 My sister French at university. (study)
- 6 He at a fantastic hotel on holiday last summer. (stay)
- 7 My friends to go out last Saturday night. (not want)
- 8 I the summer holidays when I was a child. (love)
- 9 The rain after fifteen minutes. (stop)
- 10 I my car last week, so now it's really dirty. (not clean)
- 11 They jazz when they were young, but now they love it. (not like)
- 12 We the heavy boxes up the stairs to the sixth floor. (carry)

30b Complete the story. Use the past simple of the verbs in brackets.

"This (0) *happened* (happen) a year ago. I usually drive to the town centre to meet my friend for lunch on Saturdays, but that day I (1) (decide) to take the bus. I (2) (wait) at the bus stop for ten minutes, but the bus (3) (not arrive), so I (4) (try) to call my friend from a nearby phone box. Unfortunately, she (5) (not answer) and while I was there, I (6) (miss) the bus! So I (7) (start) to walk. When I finally (8) (arrive) at the restaurant an hour later, my friend (9) (not believe) my story and (10) (shout) at me for being late!"

30c Complete the conversations. Use the past simple of the verbs in the boxes.

dance	enjoy	finish	talk	walk
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- A: (0) *Did* you *enjoy* the party on Saturday night?
 B: Yes. The music was great, so I (1) a lot. And I (2) to some interesting people.
 A: What time (3) the party ?
 B: At about two. Then I (4) home.

hate	live	move	start	travel	work
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- A: (5) you in London when you were a child?
 B: No. My father (6) as a diplomat and we (7) all over the world.
 A: When (8) you to London?
 B: Five years ago, when I (9) work. I (10) it at first, but now I love it.

31 Past simple: irregular verbs

Some verbs do not form the past simple with *-ed*. They are irregular: *eat* → *ate*
drink → *drank* *find* → *found* *go* → *went* *see* → *saw*

▶▶ See Appendix 11: Irregular verbs, pages 172–173.

Affirmative		They	won	the prize.
Negative		They	didn't win	the prize.
Question	Did	they	win	the prize?



The past simple of *be* is *was/were*: *I was busy. They weren't at home. Was Mark with you?*

PRACTICE

31a Complete the sentences. Use the past simple.

Every year

- 0 We go to a different country on holiday.
- 1 We see the famous monuments.
- 2 We take a lot of photos.
- 3 We sleep late every morning.
- 4 We eat the local food.
- 5 We meet some interesting people.
- 6 We buy souvenirs to take home.

Last year

- We *went* to Greece.
- We the Parthenon.
- We more than 100 photos.
- We until ten o'clock.
- We some Greek salad.
- We a Greek family.
- We a beautiful vase.

31b Complete the story. Use the past simple of the verbs in brackets.

"Last week my mother (0) *lent* (lend) me her car and I (1) (drive) to a nearby town. I parked the car in a side street and I (2) (do) some shopping. When it (3) (be) time to go home, I realised that I (4) (not remember) where the car (5) (be). I (6) (spend) about an hour looking for it, but I (7) (not find) it. I (8) (feel) really stupid. Finally, I (9) (ring) my mother. Fortunately, she (10) (not get) angry. She (11) (tell) me to leave the car and come home. So I (12) (catch) a bus and the next day we (13) (go) back together and (14) (find) the car."

31c Complete the conversations. Use the past simple of the verbs in brackets.

- 0 A: Where *did you put* your keys? (you / put)
B: I think I *left* them on the table. (leave)
- 1 A: What time ? (the concert / begin)
B: It at nine, but some people late. (begin, come)
- 2 A: What you for your birthday? (your parents / give)
B: A sweater. But my sister me anything! (not give)
- 3 A: Where yesterday when I called? (you / be)
B: I at home, but I the phone. (be, not hear)
- 4 A: How your leg? (you / break)
B: I off my bike. (fall)
- 5 A: What to the wedding? (your brother / wear)
B: He a new suit. It 500 euros! (wear, cost)

Past continuous

We use the past continuous to talk about:

- an action that was in progress at a particular time in the past, often with time expressions like *at one o'clock*, *last night*. The action started before that time and continued after that time: **At one o'clock yesterday we *were having* lunch.**
- an action or state that continued for a long time, often with expressions like *all day*, *all morning*: **I *was working* all day yesterday.**
- two actions that were in progress at the same time in the past, often with the word *while*. Notice when we use a comma (,): **Yuri *was washing* the car *while* Katya *was watching* TV. *While* Katya *was watching* TV, Yuri *was washing* the car.**

! We use the past simple, not the past continuous, with state verbs: **I *heard* a noise outside.** (Not *I was hearing a noise outside.*)

Affirmative	I/he/she/it was walking	we/you/they were walking
Negative	I/he/she/it wasn't walking	we/you/they weren't walking
Question	Was I/he/she/it walking?	Were we/you/they walking?
Short answers	Yes, I/he/she/it was.	Yes, we/you/they were.
	No, I/he/she/it wasn't.	No, we/you/they weren't.

►► See Appendix 5: Spelling rules for verbs + -ing, page 171.

PRACTICE

32a Complete the sentences. Use the past continuous of the verbs in brackets.

- 0 I *was sitting* at home one day, feeling miserable. (sit)
- 1 It and I about my summer holidays. (rain, think)
- 2 Later that day, I the Internet. (surf)
- 3 I for anything in particular. (not look)
- 4 Then I found an interesting site. A new airline cheap flights to India. (advertise)
- 5 Some of my friends round India. (travel)
- 6 They were in Delhi and they a wonderful time. (have)
- 7 Suddenly, it seemed like a good idea to join them and two days later I at home in cold, miserable England; I to Delhi! (not sit, fly)
- 8 When I got off the plane, my friends to meet me. (wait)

32b Complete the conversations. Use the past continuous of the verbs in brackets.

- o A: What *were you doing* yesterday evening? I knocked on the door, but no one answered. (you / do)
B: I *was listening* to loud music. I didn't hear you knock. (listen)
- 1 A: Where at eight o'clock this morning? (Karl / go)
B: To a job interview. That's why he a suit and tie. (wear)
- 2 A: the computer all morning? (you / use)
B: Yes, I I to some friends online. (chat)
- 3 A: The neighbours a lot of noise last night! (make)
B: Yes, I know. They their wedding anniversary while the rest of us to get some sleep! (celebrate, try)
- 4 A: I didn't see Eve or George in August. What ? (they / do)
B: Well, Eve across the US with some friends and George in his dad's shop. (drive, work)
- 5 A: Who to outside the cinema last night? (you / talk)
B: Some friends. We the film. (discuss)
- 6 A: I'm so tired! Brian and I in the garden all day yesterday! (dig)
B: Really? Why ? (you / dig)

32c Complete the news story. Use the past continuous of the verbs in the box.

do have plant ~~rob~~ sleep talk work

Noisy neighbours help burglars

There was a burglary at the home of local man Mike Knight yesterday afternoon. It seems that the thieves (0) *were robbing* Mr Knight's house while he (1) some work in his garden. 'I (2) vegetables in the garden all afternoon,' Mr Knight told reporters, 'and I didn't hear a thing.'

While Mr Knight (3) in the garden, his neighbours (4) a barbecue to celebrate their son's birthday. 'They (5) really loudly,' Mr Knight said.

When Mr Knight went into his house, his dog Goldie (6) peacefully in the living room, but the TV and hi-fi were missing. 'I don't understand why Goldie didn't bark,' said Mr Knight. 'Maybe the thieves gave him some sleeping pills!'



Past continuous and past simple

- We can use the past simple and past continuous together, to talk about an action that happened while another action was in progress. We use the past continuous for the longer action that was in progress. We use the past simple for the shorter action: *I **was working** when he **arrived**.*
 - We often use *when* before the action in the past simple and *while* before the action in the past continuous. Notice when we use a comma (,):
*I was sleeping **when** the phone rang. **When** the phone rang, I was sleeping.*
*The phone rang **while** I was sleeping. **While** I was sleeping, the phone rang.*
- ⚠ We use past simple + *when* + past simple to say that one action happened after another action: *We **had** dinner **when** Kim **arrived**. **When** Kim **arrived**, we **had** dinner.* (First Kim arrived. Then we had dinner.)

PRACTICE

33a Complete the sentences. Use *when* or *while*.

- 0 Was it snowing *when* you went to bed last night?
- 1 They had lunch they were waiting for the plane.
- 2 she put new batteries in the toy, it started working again.
- 3 I was walking home, I fell over and cut my knee.
- 4 Helen didn't say hello I saw her this morning.
- 5 you were out jogging, Frank brought your book back.
- 6 Did everybody go home the concert finished?

33b Write sentences. Use the past simple and past continuous.

- 0 while / I / do / the washing up / I / break / a glass
While I was doing the washing up, I broke a glass.
- 1 your mother / ring / while / you / have / a bath
.....
- 2 when / we / see / them / they / buy / food / for the party
.....
- 3 while / she / shop / she / meet / on old friend
.....
- 4 we / park / our car / when / we / have / the accident
.....
- 5 what / you / read / when / I / come / into the room?
.....
- 6 while / I / chop / the onions / I / cut / my finger
.....

33C Complete the article. Use the past simple or past continuous of the verbs in brackets.

A funny thing (o) *happened* (happen) while I
(1) (fly) to London last summer. When I
(2) (get) on the plane, I (3)
(take off) my jacket and put it in the overhead locker. When the passenger next
to me (4) (sit) down, I was surprised to see that she
(5) (wear) the same jacket as me.

Anyway, the plane (6) (land) and we went to
pick up our bags at the luggage carousel. While I (7)
(wait) for my bags, I (8) (decide) to listen to some music.
But when I (9) (look) for my MP3 player in my jacket
pocket, it (10) (not be) there. Then I realised I had
the woman's jacket – and she had mine!