

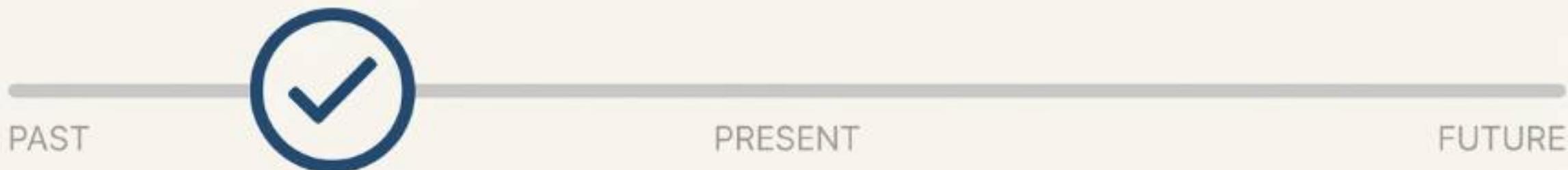
Mastering the Past

A Clear and Practical Guide to the Simple Past Tense



When to Use the Simple Past

We use the simple past tense to talk about actions and events that are completely finished.



We **watched** a movie last night.

They **visited** the museum.

She **baked** a cake for her friend's birthday party.

Two Paths to Form the Past

To create the past form of a verb, you'll follow one of two paths. The path depends on whether the verb is "regular" or "irregular".



The First Path: Regular Verbs

Rule 01: The Standard -ed Ending

Most regular verbs form the past tense by simply adding **-ed** to the base form.

walk → walked

watch → watched

repair → repaired

He **repaired** his car yesterday afternoon.

Regular Verbs: Spelling Rules

Rule 02: For verbs ending in **-e**,
just add **-d**.

dance → danced

bake → baked

Rule 03: For verbs ending in a
consonant + **y**, change the **-y** to **-ied**.

carry → carr **ied**

study → studied

The Second Path: Irregular Verbs

Irregular verbs do not follow the -ed rule. Their past forms are unique and must be learned.

eat → **ate**

🚫 ~~eated~~

drink → **drank**

🚫 ~~drinked~~

go → **went**

🚫 ~~goed~~

Common Irregular Verbs (Part 1)

These common verbs have unique past forms.

Base Form

eat

drink

speak

sleep

see

hear

feel

think

go

come

Past Form

ate

drank

spoke

slept

saw

heard

felt

thought

went

came

Common Irregular Verbs (Part 2)

Base Form	Past Form	Base Form	Past Form
do	did	leave	left
say	said	catch	caught
tell	told	teach	taught
get	got	write	wrote
take	took	read	read
put	put	meet	met
cut	cut	run	ran
keep	kept	pay	paid
make	made	swim	swam
begin	began	forget	forgot

A Special Case: Unchanging Verbs

Some irregular verbs have the same form for both the present (base) and the past. The context of the sentence tells you it's in the past.

cost, hit, set, let, cut, put, shut, hurt, spread, read*

Yesterday, he **cut** the cake into small slices.

*Notice: The verb 'read' is spelled the same, but the pronunciation changes from /ri:d/ (present) to /rəd/ (past).

Application: Asking Questions

Did + Subject + Base Form of Verb ?



Notice the main verb returns to its original base form.
The word 'Did' shows the sentence is in the past.

Did you **watch** a movie last night?

Did she **bake** a cake?

Application: Making Negative Statements

Subject + **did not** + Base Form of Verb

The main verb returns to its **base form** here, too.

We **did not watch** a movie last night.

They **did not** visit the museum.

In conversation and informal writing, we usually use the contraction: 'did not' → 'didn't'

Putting It All Together

Affirmative

She **baked** a
cake.

Negative

She **did not bake**
a cake.

Question

Did she **bake** a
cake?

They **went** to
the museum.

They **did not go**
to the museum.

Did they **go** to
the museum?

The Simple Past: Your Complete Guide

USE

For completed actions in the past.



IRREGULAR VERBS

Unique forms, must be learned.

eat → **ate**

go → **went**

see → **saw**

REGULAR VERBS

- Base + **ed** → **walked**
- Base ending in -e + **d** → **danced**
- Base ending in consonant + **y** → **ied** → **studied**

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

? Did + Subject + **Base Verb**?

– Subject + **didn't** + **Base Verb**.