

Language Focus



Network

Simple Past Tense

This tense is used to represent an action/event that happened in the past. The simple past tense is formed by adding an 'ed' or a 'd' to the end of the base verb. However, there are other verbs which behave differently and take different spellings when used in the simple past form. The formula of simple past tense can be seen as follow:

Structure of Simple Past Tense

Positive	Negative	Interrogative	Negative Interrogative
Subject + Verb in the past form (base form of the verb + ed/d for regular verbs or past tense form of the irregular verbs)	Subject + Didn't + Verb in the base form	Did + Subject + Verb in the base form	Didn't + Subject + Verb in the base form
Example: You spoke really well. I had my breakfast.	Example: You did not speak really well. I did not have my breakfast.	Example: Did you speak really well? Did I have my breakfast?	Example: Didn't you speak really well? Didn't I have my breakfast?

Rules and Points to Remember When Using the Simple Past Tense

When conjugating a verb in the simple past tense, there are a few points you have to remember and bear in mind.

1. **Conjugating regular verbs** – In order to present the main verb in the sentence, you just have to add ‘-ed’ to the end of the regular verb and ‘-d’ to the end of a regular verb which ends with an ‘e’. **For example:** Reach – reached, kick – kicked, walk – walked, confess – confessed, work – worked
2. **Verbs that remain the same** – Some verbs take the same spelling as the base verb and remain the same in the past tense. **For example:** Cut – cut, put – put, hurt – hurt, set – set, hit – hit
3. **Verbs that take different spelling patterns** – Irregular verbs are seen to follow different spelling patterns and there is no rule as such to explain why they are so. **For example:** Buy – bought, think – thought, draw – drew, drink – drank, see – saw

The Use the Simple Past Tense

The simple past tense can be used to:

Referring to an action that happened in the past

- We **went** to the market yesterday evening.
- I totally **forgot** about the meeting.

Referring to an action that was true for some time in the past

- Karthik **played** tennis when he was in school.
- Miss Holly **worked** as a guest lecturer at our college.

Referring to an action that took place several times in the past

- I worked as an academic counsellor for six months.
- We enjoyed playing Pictionary every time we met.

Exercise

Fill in the blank with suitable verb form in past tense!

1. my parents last week. (visit)
2. She in 2005. (graduate)
3. It for hours. (rain)
4. She In the morning. (arrive)
5. They the winners. (congratulate)
6. She (tell) me a story.
7. The cat (drink) all the milk.
8. I (bake) a cake yesterday.
9. She (request) them to help her.
10. I for a walk in the morning. (go)
11. She (promise) to buy me an ice-cream.
12. I (take) two hours to finish the job.