

Past Simple

Past Simple - Introduction

Past simple is the basic form of the past tense in English.

‘Past simple’ and ‘simple past’ are the same.

Past simple often uses finished time words (last week, 2 days ago, ...).

It doesn’t matter how long ago ‘things’ happened.

The duration is also not important.

This might look like a tense in your native language but the usage could be very different.

Past Simple - Usage

Past simple is used for

- completed actions that happened earlier
- completed states that happened earlier
- completed feelings that happened earlier
- news details
- unlikely or impossible situations – second conditional
- reported speech

Past Simple - Formation

Positive:

subject + verb+ed

I liked ice-cream.

Negative:

subject + did not + infinitive (without 'to')

We didn't like ice-cream.

Question:

did + subject + infinitive (without 'to')

Did she like ice-cream?

Negative question:

did not + subject + infinitive (without 'to')

Didn't he like ice-cream?

Past Simple – Examples #1

completed actions that happened earlier

- I watched the film yesterday.
- The Romans invaded Britain.

completed states that happened earlier

- Her dog died last year.
- Their second child was born last week.

completed feelings that happened earlier

- He never wanted children when he was a teenager.
- As a child, she wanted to be a ballet dancer.

Past Simple – Examples #2

news details

- We've been visiting family. We stayed with my sister and uncle.
- I've just come back from a great holiday. I went to Rome and Venice.

unlikely or impossible situation – second conditional

- If it wasn't raining, we would be outside playing.
- If I had more time, I would do more sport.

reported speech

- "I like pizza" – She said she liked pizza.
- "I play cricket" – He said he played cricket.