

## past simple.

Study this example

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an Austrian musician and composer. He **lived** from 1756 to 1791. He **started** composing at the age of five and **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music. He **was** only 35 years old when he **died**.

Lived, started, wrote, was, and died are all **past simple**.

### A / Form

Affirmative	Question	Negative
I worked	did I work?	I did not work
you worked	did you work?	you did not work
he/she/it worked	did he/she/it work?	he/she/it did not work
We / you / they worked	did we/ you /they work ?	we/you/they did not work

### Notes

- Contracted negatives : I didn't work, you didn't work etc.
- Negative questions : did I not work? or didn't I work? etc.
- Questions and negatives of irregular verbs are made in the same way as those of regular verbs (with did + infinitive).

### ➡ Irregular verbs

Irregular verbs have the same form for all persons (I, **you**, **he**, **she**, etc)

I/ he/she/ it/ we/ you/ they left, went, etc.

Irregular verbs are irregular in the past simple in the positive only (not in the negative or question form)

go — went      She **went** home yesterday,

sit — sat      I **sat** down,

write -- wrote      She **wrote** for hours.

- Remember to use the infinitive without ed for questions and negatives.

### B . Spelling of regular affirmative past tense forms

- Most regular verbs: add - ed  
work - worked    stay - stayed    show -showed    wonder - wondered    visit - visited  
gallop - galloped
- Verbs ending in -e: add -d :    hope - hoped      decide- decided
- Verbs ending in one stressed vowel + one consonant (except w or y) double the consonant and add -ed

Shop - shopped      plan - planned      refer – referred      re'gret - regretted

But (last syllable not stressed): 'offer - offered      'visit – visited

- Verbs ending in consonant + -y: change y to i and add - ed: hurry - hurried    cry – cried study - studied  
But (vowel + -y): play - played
- Verbs ending in -c have ck in the past (e.g. picnic - picnicked ).
- In British English, -l is doubled in the past after one short vowel even if the vowel is not stressed:  
'travel - travelled.

### C. Pronunciation of -ed

The regular past ending -ed is pronounced as follows:

- /d/ after vowels and voiced consonants (except /d/):    tried , lived , used , failed
- / t / after unvoiced consonants (except / t /):    stopped , passed , laughed ,watched , worked
- /ɪd/ after /d/ and / t / :    Ended , started

### D / Use

**1/ completed actions:** We use the simple past to talk about events, actions or situations which happened in the past and are now finished.

- ✚ The time or approximate time that the event took place is stated (e.g. I played tennis yesterday) or is understood from the context (e.g. I didn't eat any breakfast).
- ✚ Some typical expressions with the past simple are : yesterday, this morning/evening, last week/year, a year/month ago, that day/afternoon, the other day/week, at eleven o'clock, on Tuesday, in 1990, just, recently, once, earlier, then, next, after that, etc.( A phrase with « **ago** » means a finished time. It doesn't include the present (I saw that film two days ago))
- ✚ The action may be in the very recent past. (your mother phoned a few minutes ago) Or it may be in the more distant past. (When I was younger I played football most days).
- ✚ It may be a short action (Pam phoned this morning) or a long one (I painted the kitchen yesterday. It took all day).
- ✚ We use the past simple to talk about a single event (I went out last night) or repeated events (I went out three times last week).

### 2/ We can also use the past simple for past states and situations.

Example :      I was at home all last night.

                    The Romans had a huge empire.

                    In 1950, there were fewer than 50 million cars in use around the world.

                    We lived in Scotland until I was fifteen.

### 3/ Past habits, routines, or regular events .

Examples :      We went out for a meal every evening on holiday.

                    He got up at 7 o'clock every morning to go to work.

Notes :

There are other ways of expressing repeated actions and habits in the past.

A/ **Used to** : we use « used to » to talk about past habits and states that do not occur now or no longer exist.

Examples : we used to walk to school, but now we get the bus.

He used to be really shy, but he's much more confident since he started his new job.

❖ Used to is not used to say how often things happened or how long they took.

❖ Be careful not to confuse « used to » with « be/get used to + noun/gerund » which means « be/become accustomed to something » because you have been doing it for a while.

Example : I am used to working nights.

B/ **Would** : would is also used to talk about past habits and repeated actions BUT not about past states.

Example : when I was little, I would dress up in our mother's old clothes.

❖ Would to talk about past habits and routines is rarely used in a negative or question form. (we didn't use to get much homework at school NOT we wouldn't get..)

4/ **The simple past is used in narrative**- when we tell stories and when we tell people about past events.

Examples : Once upon a time a princess went into a wood and sat down by a stream...

I saw John this morning, he told me...

#### 5/ **With present or future meaning**

A past tense doesn't always have a past meaning. In some kinds of sentences we can use verbs like « I had, you went or I wondered » to talk about the present or future.

A/ **after if, unless, supposing, etc.** : after if, unless and words with similar meanings, we often use past forms to refer to the present or future.

Examples/ If I had the money now, I'd buy a car.

If you caught the 10 o'clock train tomorrow, you could be in Edinburgh by supper-time, unless the train was delayed, of course.

You look as if you were just about to scream.

Supposing we didn't go on holiday next year ?

B/ **After it's time, would rather and wish** : after these expressions, too, past forms can have present or future meanings.

Examples : Ten o'clock- it's time you went home.

Don't come and see me today- I'd rather you came tomorrow.

I wish I had a better memory.

C/ **Distancing in questions, requests, etc.** : we can make questions, requests and offers less direct ( and so more polite) by using past tenses. Common formulae are I wondered, I thought, I hoped, Did you want, etc. Past progressive forms (I was wondering etc.) make sentences even less direct.

Examples : I wondered if you were free this evening.

I thought you might like some flowers.

Did you want cream with your coffee, sir?

D/ **Past models** : the past model forms could, might, would, and should usually have present or future reference ; they are used as less direct, « distanced » forms of can.

Examples :    Could you help me for a moment ?

                  Would you come this way, please?