

Past tenses 1

past simple; past continuous; *used to*; *would*

1 Past simple

+	verb + <i>-ed</i> (or <i>-d</i>)	<i>He worked for the police.</i>
-	<i>did not</i> + verb	<i>She didn't work for the police.</i>
?	<i>did ...</i> + verb?	<i>Did they work for the police?</i>

⚠ Irregular verbs

Many verbs are irregular: **went** (go), **came** (come), **wrote** (write) (see Appendix 1)

Note the verb *be* is irregular: I/he/she/it **was**; you/we/they **were**

We use the past simple

◆ to talk about single past completed actions. Often the time is mentioned:

*A few weeks ago a woman **called** to report a robbery at her house.*

But no time reference is necessary if it is already known:

*How **did** the burglar **break** in without anybody hearing him? (in the story I just told you about)*

◆ to give a series of actions in the order that they happened:

*The burglar **came in** through the front door, **picked up** the woman's handbag, **emptied** it out and **stole** her purse.*

*he **came in** **picked up** **emptied** and **stole**
 the handbag it out her purse*



THE PAST

NOW

We often use words like *next* or *then* to indicate the sequence of events:

***Then**, the burglar **went** into the front room, **opened** all the cupboards and **took** a valuable collection of CDs.*

- ◆ to talk about past repeated actions:

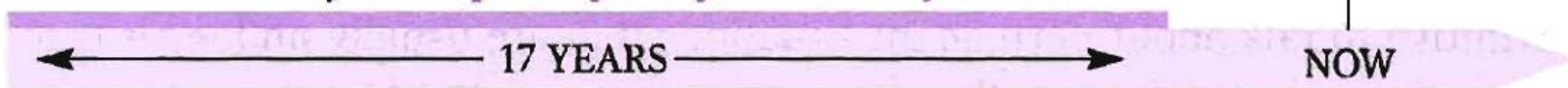
*When her son got older he often **went out** to visit his friends after school.*

Notice that *used to* and *would* can also be used (see B3).

- ◆ to talk about long-term situations in the past which are no longer true:

*Bill Murphy **worked** for the police force for over 17 years.*

*he **worked** for the police force for over 17 years*



*Explorers at that time **believed** that the world was flat.*

Notice that *used to* can also be used (see B3).

2 Past continuous

+ *was/were + verb + -ing*

She was watching the news.

- *was/were not + verb + -ing*

They weren't watching the news.

? *was/were ... + verb + -ing?*

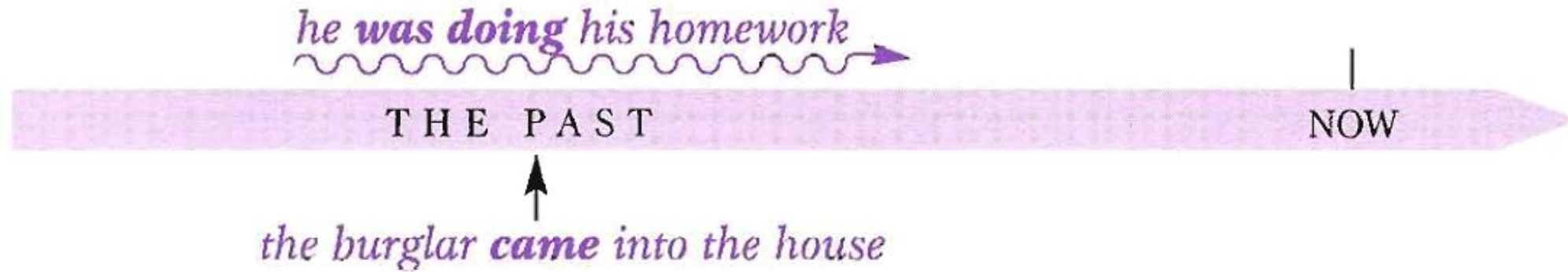
Were you watching the news?

We use the past continuous

- ◆ to provide the background scene to an action or event (usually in the past simple). We often use words like *when*, *while* and *as*:

*It happened at five in the afternoon **while** she **was watching** the news on TV.*

*He **was doing** his homework in his bedroom **when** the burglar came into the house.*



It is possible to have more than one background scene happening at the same time:

*He **was listening** to music and **working** on his computer.*

- ◆ when we want to emphasize the activity without focusing on its completion. Compare:
*For a while last year I **was working** at the cinema, **studying** for my degree and **writing** a column for the local newspaper. (we don't know if the actions were completed or not, or whether they happened at the same time)*
*Last year I **worked** at the cinema, **studied** for my degree and **wrote** a column for the local newspaper. (suggests all of the jobs are now complete, and probably happened in that order)*
- ▲ State verbs (see Unit 1) do not generally have a continuous form.

3 *Used to and would*

+	<i>used to / would + infinitive</i>	<i>She used to / would lock the door.</i>
-	<i>did not + use to + infinitive</i>	<i>I didn't use to lock the door.</i>
?	<i>did ... use to + infinitive?</i>	<i>Did they use to lock the door?</i>

We use *used to + infinitive* or *would + infinitive* (contracted to 'd in spoken English) to talk about past repeated actions:

She used to keep the front door locked. (but she stopped doing this)

She would leave the door unlocked whenever she was at home.

We use *used to* + infinitive to talk about permanent situations that are usually no longer true:
*Bill Murphy **used to work** for the police force. (but he doesn't now: **not** ~~Bill Murphy would work for the police force.~~)*

We do not use *used to* if we want to talk about how long the situation lasted:
*Bill Murphy **worked** for the police force for over 17 years. (**not** ~~Bill Murphy used to work for the police force for over 17 years.~~)*

⚠ We do not use *would* with state verbs.

Fill in the gaps with the past simple or past continuous form of the verbs in brackets. In which gaps could you use *used to*?

I 1 *had* (have) a wonderful biology teacher, Mrs Hughes. She 2
(make) us excited about the subject because she was so interested herself. I remember
one lesson in particular; we 3 (study) different types of plants, and Mrs
Hughes 4 (describe) the different parts of the flower. She 5
(pick up) a purple flower, I can't remember exactly what it was, and then suddenly we
6 (notice) that she 7 (cry)! She 8 (apologise)
and 9 (say) that sometimes nature was so beautiful it just made her cry! We
10 (not/know) what to do at first, but it certainly 11 (make)
us think. Something similar 12 (happen) while she 13
(show) us how to work the microscope. She 14 (examine) a slide of
some plant tissue and she 15 (smile) all over her face. She suddenly
16 (get) all excited and 17 (say), 'Isn't it wonderful?' Some
students 18 (laugh) at her when she 19 (not/look) but I
didn't. Somehow her enthusiasm 20 (inspire) me, and I 21
(start) to like biology.

2 made 3 were studying 4 was describing 5 picked up
6 noticed 7 was crying 8 apologised 9 said 10 didn't
know 11 made 12 happened 13 was showing
14 was examining 15 was smiling 16 got 17 said
18 laughed 19 wasn't looking 20 inspired 21 started
(➤ B1 and B2)

Used to is possible in 1 and 2: *used to have* and *used to make*

Test practice

Academic Reading

*You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1–13** which are based on the Reading Passage below.*

1) Paragraph B **viii**

2) Paragraph C **vii**

3) Paragraph D **vi**

4) Paragraph E **iv**

5) Paragraph F **iii**

Questions 6-9

Complete each of the following statements with words taken from the passage.

Write **ONE** or **TWO WORDS** for each answer.

6) According to a recent study, well-lit streets do not **deter crime** or make neighbourhoods safer to live in.

7) Inefficient lighting increases **(air) pollution** because most electricity is produced from coal, gas or oil.

8) Efficient lights **block light** from going into areas where it is not needed.

9) In dealing with light pollution **education** is at least as important as passing new laws.

Show Answers - Hide Answers

Questions 10-13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in [Reading Passage 1](#)?

In boxes 10-13 on your answer sheet, write

10) One group of scientists find their observations are made more difficult by bright lights. **YES**

11) It is expensive to reduce light pollution. **NO**

12) Many countries are now making light pollution illegal. **NOT GIVEN**

13) Old types of light often cause more pollution than more modern ones. **YES**