

THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE

FORM

The simple past tense in regular verbs is formed by adding **ed** to the infinitive:

to work = worked. Verbs ending in **e** add **d** only: *to love = loved*

The same form is used for all persons: I worked you worked he worked etc.

The negative of regular and irregular verbs is formed with **did not (didn't)** and the infinitive: I did not/didn't work you did not/didn't work etc.

The interrogative of regular and irregular verbs is formed with **did** + subject + infinitive: did I work? did you work? etc.

Negative interrogative: did you not/didn't you work? etc.

Spelling notes

The rules about doubling the final consonant when adding **ing** (see 165) apply also when adding **ed**: *admit, admitted stop, stopped travel, travelled*

Verbs ending in **y** following a consonant change the **y** into **i** before adding **ed**: *carry, carried try, tried* but **y** following a vowel does not change: *obey, obeyed.*

USE

A/ Completed Action in the Past : Use the Simple Past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past.

I **saw** a movie yesterday.

I **didn't see** a play yesterday.

Last year, I **traveled** to Japan..

B/ A Series of Completed Actions : We use the Simple Past to list a series of completed actions in the past. These actions happen 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on (narration)

I **finished** work, **walked** to the beach, and **found** a nice place to swim.

He **arrived** from the airport at 8:00, **checked** into the hotel at 9:00, and **met** the others at 10:00.

Did you **add** flour, **pour** in the milk, and then **add** the eggs?

C/ Duration in Past : The Simple Past can be used with a duration which starts and stops in the past.

I **lived** in Brazil for two years.

Shauna **studied** Japanese for five years.

We **talked** on the phone for thirty minutes.

D/ Habits in the Past : The Simple Past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past. It can have the same meaning as "used

to." To make it clear that we are talking about a habit, we often add expressions such as: always, often, usually, never, when I was a child, when I was younger, etc.

I **studied** French when I was a child.

He **played** the violin.

She **worked** at the movie theater after school.

They never **went** to school, they always **skipped** class.

E/ The simple past is used in conditional sentences, type 2 (For use of the unreal past after *as if, as though, it is time, if only, wish, would sooner/rather*)

Exercise 1 : Put the verbs in the following sentences into the simple past tense.

1 I go to work by bus.

2 I meet her on Tuesdays.

3 He always wears black.

4 I make cakes every week.

5 She gets up at 6.30.

6 He understands me.

7 He shuts the shop at 6.00.

8 She speaks slowly.

9 He leaves the house at 9.00.

10 I read a chapter every night.

11 You eat too much.

12 I see him every day.

13 Tom sings in the choir.

14 He cries when he is hurt.

15 Who knows the answer?

16 I think I know it.

17 The curtain rises at 8.00.

18 He takes the dog out twice a day.

19 We buy them here.

20 They fly to New York.

21 Ann draw you a map.

22 Tom lay the table.

23 Mr Pitt fall downstairs.

24 She lose her way.

25 He forbid her to leave.

26 I send it to the laundry.

27 Jack keep the money.

28 He ride slowly.

- 29 They spend it all.
- 30 She sell the car.
- 31 We drink water.
- 32 His roses grow well.
- 33 He rides every day.
- 34 He often falls off.
- 35 These dogs fight whenever they meet.
- 36 He puts up his prices every year.
- 37 He sleeps badly.

Exercise 2 : Put the verbs into the present perfect or the simple past tense. In some sentences the present perfect continuous is also possible.

- This is my house. ~ How long you (live) here? ~ I (live) here since 1970.
 He (live) in London for two years and then (go) to Edinburgh.
 But when I (leave) school I (cut) my hair and (wear) it short ever since.
 Shakespeare (write) a lot of plays.
 My brother (write) several plays. He just (finish) his second tragedy.
 I (fly) over Loch Ness last week. ~ You (see) the Loch Ness monster?
 I (not see) him for three years. I wonder where he is.
 Chopin (compose) some of his music in Majorca.
 When he (arrive)? ~ He (arrive) at 2.00.
 You (lock) the door before you left the house?
 I (read) his books when I was at school. I (enjoy) them very much.
 I can't go out because I (not finish) my work.
 I (write) the letter but I can't find a stamp.
 The clock is slow. ~ It isn't slow, it (stop).
 Here are your shoes; I just (clean) them.
 I (leave) home at 8.00 and (get) here at twelve.
 He just (go) out.
 He (go) out ten minutes ago.
 I (meet) him last June.
 You (see) the moon last night?
 The play just (begin). You are a little late.
 The newspaper (come)? ~ Yes, Ann is reading it.
 The actors (arrive) yesterday and (start) rehearsals early this morning.
 It (be) very cold this year. I wonder when it is going to get warmer.
 Cervantes (write) *Don Quixote*.
 He (break) his leg in a skiing accident last year.
 Mr Pound is the bank manager. He (be) here for five years.
 I (see) three police cars this morning.

- After he (arrive) home, he (unpack) and (go) to bed early.
 I (be) in London for three years. I love it here.
 We (see) Julie last night.
 He (be) a teacher before he (become) a musician.
 The children (break) a window in the school last week.

Exercise 3 : present perfect or simple present

2. Sam (arrive) in San Diego a week ago.
3. My best friend and I (know) each other for over fifteen years. We still get together once a week.
4. Stinson is a fantastic writer. He (write) ten very creative short stories in the last year. One day, he'll be as famous as Hemingway.
5. I (have, not) this much fun since I (be) a kid.
6. Things (change) a great deal at Coltech, Inc. When we first (start) working here three years ago, the company (have, only) six employees. Since then, we (expand) to include more than 2000 full-time workers.
7. I (tell) him to stay on the path while he was hiking, but he (wander) off into the forest and (be) bitten by a snake.
8. Listen Donna, I don't care if you (miss) the bus this morning. You (be) late to work too many times. You are fired!
9. Sam is from Colorado, which is hundreds of miles from the coast, so he (see, never) the ocean. He should come with us to Miami.
10. How sad! George (dream) of going to California before he died, but he didn't make it. He (see, never) the ocean.
11. In the last hundred years, traveling (become) much easier and very comfortable. In the 19th century, it (take) two or three months to cross North America by covered wagon. The trip (be) very rough and often dangerous. Things (change) a great deal in the last hundred and fifty years. Now you can fly from New York to Los Angeles in a matter of hours.
12. Jonny, I can't believe how much you (change) since the last time I (see) you. You (grow) at least a foot!
13. This tree (be) planted by the settlers who (found) our city over four hundred years ago.
14. This mountain (be, never) climbed by anyone. Several mountaineers (try) to reach the top, but nobody (succeed, ever). The climb is extremely difficult and many people (die) trying to reach the summit.
15. I (visit, never) Africa, but I (travel) to South America several times. The last time I (go) to South America, I (visit) Brazil and Peru. I (spend) two weeks in the Amazon, (hike) for a week near Machu Picchu, and (fly) over the Nazca Lines.