

GRAMMAR SUPPLEMENT

THE SIMPLE PAST

[Adapted from learnenglish.britishcouncil.org]

1.1 FORM

With most verbs, the past tense is formed by **adding -ed** to the base form (infinitive). Sometimes, there are spelling changes. Look at the following examples. Can you identify those changes?

<i>called</i>	<i>wanted</i>	<i>worked</i>	<i>liked</i>	<i>studied</i>	<i>played</i>	<i>stopped</i>
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But there are a lot of **irregular** past tense forms in English. Here are the most common irregular verbs in English, with their past tense forms:

Base Form	Past Form
be	was / were
begin	began
break	broke
bring	brought
buy	bought
build	built
choose	chose
come	came
cost	cost
cut	cut
do	do
draw	drew
drink	drank
drive	drove
eat	ate
feel	felt
find	found
get	got
give	gave
go	went
have	had
hear	heard
hold	held
keep	kept
know	knew

Base Form	Past Form
leave	left
let	let
lose	lost
make	made
meet	met
pay	paid
put	put
read	read
run	ran
say	said
sell	sold
send	sent
sit	sat
speak	spoke
spend	spent
stand	stood
swim	swam
take	took
teach	taught
tell	told
think	thought
understand	understood
wear	wore
win	won
write	wrote

1.2 USE

We **use** the **past tense** to talk about...

a) something that happened **once** in the past:

- I met my wife in 2010.
- We went to Brazil for our holidays.
- They got home very late last night.

b) something that happened **several times** in the past:

- When I was a boy, I walked a mile to school every day.
- We swam a lot while we were on holiday.
- They always enjoyed visiting their friends.

c) something that was **true for some time** in the past:

- I lived abroad for ten years.
- He enjoyed being a student.
- She played a lot of tennis when she was younger.

We often use **expressions with ago** with the past simple:

- I met my husband a long time ago.
- Two years ago, I was still a student in high school.
- We read that book in our class a year ago.

1.3 QUESTIONS AND NEGATIVE FORMS

We use **did** to make **questions** with the past simple:

- Did she play tennis when she was younger?
- Did you live abroad?
- When did you meet your new friend?
- Where did you go for your holidays?

But questions with **who** often don't use *did*:

- Who discovered penicillin?
- Do you know who wrote *Born Guilty*?

We use **didn't (did not)** to make **negatives** with the past simple:

- They didn't go to Brazil this year.
- We didn't get home until very late last night.
- I didn't see you yesterday.

1.4 Practice Exercise A

Complete the sentences with the past simple of the verbs in parentheses ().

1. The young man (take) out his wallet and (pay) the bill.
2. When Lucy (go) to the interview, she (wear) her best suit.
3. We (leave) the motorway and (drive) for an hour on quiet country roads.
4. I (think) I (know) my irregular verbs, but now I'm not so sure!
5. As soon as I (meet) Doris, I (know) she (be) someone special.
6. Manuel Rojas (write) some great novels, but he never (win) a Nobel Prize.
7. The nurse (put) the little boy to bed and (speak) to him softly.
8. When they (hear) the fire alarm, everybody (run) out of the building.
9. Last year, the company (build) a new factory, which (cost) millions of dollars.
10. When José (break) his arm, the doctor (give) him two weeks off work.

1.5 Practice Exercise B

Put the words and expressions in the correct order to make questions.

1. salt? / remember / buy / to / some / did / you /

.....

2. I / did / I'm sorry, / say / something / wrong?

.....

3. you / start / English? / did / when / learning

.....

4. husband? / you / meet / did / where / your

.....

5. last / time / you / night? / what / did / home / get

.....

6. taxi? / you / how much / pay / did / for / the

.....

1.6 Practice Exercise C

Can you remember the sentences from the first activity? Write the correct verbs in the past simple.

1. The young man out his wallet and the bill.
2. When Lucy to the interview, she her best suit.
3. We the motorway and for an hour on quiet country roads.
4. I I my irregular verbs, but now I'm not so sure!
5. As soon as I Doris, I she someone special.
6. Manuel Rojas some great novels, but he never a Nobel Prize.
7. The nurse the little boy to bed and to him softly.
8. When they the fire alarm, everybody out of the building.
9. Last year, the company a new factory, which millions of dollars.
10. When José his arm, the doctor him two weeks off work.

1.7 Practice Exercise D

Use the words below to fill in the spaces in the sentences. The word options can be used more than once.

when	where	who	what	how much	why	did	you
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1. did he want to know?
2. Did send the message to your study partner?
3. did you go on the trip to the national park—in the summer or the winter?
4. designed this power point presentation?
5. did they cancel the class on Tuesday?

6. you enjoy your time at the beach?
7. did you get on the metro?
8. did your new smartphone cost?

1.8 Practice Exercise E

Use the correct words to complete the sentences.

<i>didn't like</i>	<i>didn't hear</i>	<i>didn't buy</i>	<i>didn't open</i>
<i>didn't feel</i>	<i>didn't pay</i>	<i>didn't leave</i>	<i>didn't talk</i>

1. Dean called to the waiter, but the waiter him.
2. When I was a young child, I really chocolate.
3. I saw Sonia in the supermarket but we
4. Chrissie went home because she well.
5. They cut off our telephone because we our bill.
6. We arrived at the airport at six, but our flight until twelve!
7. Alex spent all morning in the bookshop, but in the end he anything.
8. I a bank account until I got my first full-time job.

1.9 Practice Exercise F

Use the same words (negative verbs) as in the previous exercise to complete the sentences.

1. I to Leanne and Tony at the party.
2. We the third bottle at the picnic.
3. The professor me when I asked the question.
4. Sarah for the new app because it was free.
5. I well so I went home and took some paracetamol.
6. I any food for lunch because I wasn't hungry.
7. The bus on time, so we arrived very late.
8. The children the film because it was for adults.

1.10 Answer Key

Practice exercises A and C (different item order).

1. The young man took out his wallet and paid the bill.
2. When Lucy went to the interview, she wore her best suit.
3. We left the motorway and drove for an hour on quiet country roads.
4. I thought I knew my irregular verbs, but now I'm not so sure!
5. As soon as I met Doris, I knew she was someone special.
6. Manuel Rojas wrote some great novels, but he never won a Nobel Prize.
7. The nurse put the little boy to bed and spoke to him softly.
8. When they heard the fire alarm, everybody ran out of the building.
9. Last year, the company built a new factory, which cost millions of dollars.
10. When José broke his arm, the doctor gave him two weeks off work.

Practice exercise B.

1. Did you remember to buy some salt?
2. I'm sorry, did I say something wrong?
3. When did you start learning English?
4. Where did you meet your husband?
5. What time did you get home last night?
6. How much did you pay for the taxi?

Practice exercise D.

1. What did he want to know?
2. Did you send the message to your study partner?
3. When did you go on the trip to the national park—in the summer or the winter?
4. Who designed this power point presentation?
5. Why did they cancel the class on Tuesday?
6. Did you enjoy your time at the beach?
7. Where did you get on the metro?
8. How much did your new smartphone cost?

Practice exercise E.

1. Dean called to the waiter, but the waiter didn't hear him.
2. When I was a young child, I really didn't like chocolate.
3. I saw Sonia in the supermarket but we didn't talk.
4. Chrissie went home because she didn't feel well.
5. They cut off our telephone because we didn't pay our bill.
6. We arrived at the airport at six, but our flight didn't leave until twelve!
7. Alex spent all morning in the bookshop, but in the end he didn't buy anything.
8. I didn't open a bank account until I got my first full-time job.

Practice exercise F.

1. I didn't talk to Leanne and Tony at the party.
2. We didn't open the third bottle at the picnic.
3. The professor didn't hear me when I asked the question.
4. Sarah didn't pay for the new app because it was free.
5. I didn't feel well so I went home and took some paracetamol.
6. I didn't buy any food for lunch because I wasn't hungry.
7. The bus didn't leave on time, so we arrived very late.
8. The children didn't like the film because it was for adults.