

# The past simple

## Introduction



We **booked** the room online yesterday.

## Construction

Regular verbs in the past simple end with 'ed'. For most verbs, we simply add 'ed' after the **bare infinitive**.

**Affirmative:** Subject + **bare infinitive** + ed  
I **worked** yesterday.

**Negative:** subject + 'did' + 'not' + **bare infinitive**  
I **didn't work** yesterday.

**Interrogative:** Did + subject + **bare infinitive**  
Did you **work** yesterday?

## Irregular verbs

There are many **irregular verbs**, including some of the most common verbs in the English language. Some of the most useful are:

| Do              | Be               | Go               | Have            |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| I <b>did</b>    | I <b>was</b>     | I <b>went</b>    | I <b>had</b>    |
| You <b>did</b>  | You <b>were</b>  | You <b>went</b>  | You <b>had</b>  |
| He <b>did</b>   | He <b>was</b>    | He <b>went</b>   | He <b>had</b>   |
| She <b>did</b>  | She <b>was</b>   | She <b>went</b>  | She <b>had</b>  |
| It <b>did</b>   | It <b>was</b>    | It <b>went</b>   | It <b>had</b>   |
| We <b>did</b>   | We <b>were</b>   | We <b>went</b>   | We <b>had</b>   |
| They <b>did</b> | They <b>were</b> | They <b>went</b> | They <b>had</b> |

## Uses

| The most common uses are:         | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| For completed actions in the past | He <b>worked</b> yesterday.<br><br>Did you go to work yesterday? No, I <b>had</b> the day off.<br><br>I <b>went</b> to school when I was young.<br><br>We <b>travelled</b> around Italy in June.                                       |
| For a past state                  | My grandparents <b>loved</b> each other very much.<br><br>She <b>knew</b> him before he joined the company.<br><br>Was John a teacher before he became a consultant?<br><br>It <b>wasn't</b> noisy here before the new road was built. |
| For past habits                   | I <b>cycled</b> to school every day.<br><br>They <b>closed</b> the factory for two weeks each summer.<br><br>We <b>didn't go</b> to the sea for our holidays. We <b>went</b> to the mountains.                                         |
| For historical events             | Louis XII <b>was</b> king of France.<br><br>Henry VIII <b>had</b> six wives.<br><br>Dinosaurs <b>lived</b> on earth.                                                                                                                   |

# Time phrases

When using the past tense, time phrases are often used to define when the action happened.

## Examples

| Specific             | General                     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| yesterday            | a few days/weeks ago        |
| last night           | earlier today               |
| last week            | the other evening           |
| last month           | before lunch                |
| last year            | many years ago              |
| on 21st January 2001 | a long time ago             |
| in 1925              | when I was young            |
|                      | when I was living in Africa |

## Examples



We once **had** a neighbour called Xavier. He **washed** his car every Sunday and **fixed** any problems. He **had** a son. He **helped** his father. On Friday afternoons, he **did** the shopping and he **watched** TV in the evenings.



What **did** you **do** at the weekend? I **went** to visit my parents.  
**Did** you **stay** all weekend? No I **didn't**. We just **had** Sunday lunch but I **didn't do** much else. How about you?  
 I **bought** this really big melon. They **were** on offer in Tesco's.

**Did they have any peaches? I didn't see any.**

## Pronunciation of past tense regular verbs

In the **past simple**, all regular verbs end in **-ed** but the pronunciation is not the same for all of them. This depends on the **SOUND** of the last letter of the infinitive. There are three different ways to pronounce the end of the verbs.

'id' ending. /ɪd/

For verbs ending in -ed preceded by /t/ or /d/

This is the only ending that is pronounced as an extra syllable on the end of the words.

needed  
seated  
posted  
wanted  
created  
visited  
handed

'd' ending. /d/

For verbs ending in -ed preceded by a voiced consonant [b, g, v, z, , l, m, n , etc.] or a vowel

This is not pronounced as an extra syllable. The 'e' is silent.

Examples

lived  
enjoyed  
listened  
applied  
telephoned  
played  
pleased  
offered

't' ending. /t/

For verbs ending in -ed preceded by a voiceless consonant [p, k, f, s, etc.]

This is not pronounced as an extra syllable. The 'e' is silent.

stopped  
wished  
knocked  
washed  
watched  
helped  
cooked



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