

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

# Time phrases

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

## Examples

Specific	General	
yesterday	on Monday	a few days/weeks ago
last night	in June	earlier today
last week	at 10 o'clock	the other evening
last month	this morning	before lunch
last year	5 minutes ago	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 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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