

# 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	<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>
For a past state	<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>
For past habits	<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>
For historical events	<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	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/	'd' ending. /d/	't' ending. /t/
For verbs ending in -ed preceded by /t/ or /d/	For verbs ending in -ed preceded by a voiced consonant [b, g, v, z, , l, m, n , etc.] or a vowel	For verbs ending in -ed preceded by a voiceless consonant [p, k, f, s, etc.]
This is the only ending that is pronounced as an extra syllable on the end of the words.	This not pronounced as an extra syllable. The 'e' is silent.	This is not pronounced as an extra syllable. The 'e' is silent.
	Examples	
needed seated posted wanted created visited handed	lived enjoyed listened applied telephoned played pleased offered	stopped wished knocked washed watched helped cooked

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