

The past simple of 'to be'

Introduction



They **were** at the reception desk 5 minutes ago but they are not there now.

Construction

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative	
	Full form	Contracted form	
I was	I was not	I wasn't	Was I?
You were	You were not	You weren't	Were you?
He was	He was not	He wasn't	Was he?
She was	She was not	She wasn't	Was she?
It was	It was not	It wasn't	Was it?
We were	We were not	We weren't	Were we?
They were	They were not	They weren't	Were they?

Short answers

Question:	'to be' + subject + adjective/noun	Was she at work?
Affirmative answer:	Yes + subject + 'to be'	Yes, she was.
Negative answer:	No + subject + 'to be' + not	No, she wasn't.

Note that

We do not use the contracted form for affirmative answers.

Affirmative

Yes, I was.
Yes, you were.
Yes, she was.
Yes, he was.
Yes, it was.
Yes, we were.
Yes, they were.

Negative

No, I wasn't.
No, you weren't.
No, she wasn't.
No, he wasn't.
No, it wasn't.
No, we weren't.
No, they weren't.

Examples



Hans **was** 35 last year so this year he is 36.



There **was** a lot of traffic in London last night



Tom and Mary **were** in Paris last week, they **were not** in London.



Were your visitors Swiss? No they **weren't**, they were French.



We **were** in the Alps for our holiday, it **was** wonderful.

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Last update: **2023/02/14 14:21**

