

# 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 <b>was</b>	I <b>was not</b>	I <b>wasn't</b>	<b>Was I?</b>
You <b>were</b>	You <b>were not</b>	You <b>weren't</b>	<b>Were you?</b>
He <b>was</b>	He <b>was not</b>	He <b>wasn't</b>	<b>Was he?</b>
She <b>was</b>	She <b>was not</b>	She <b>wasn't</b>	<b>Was she?</b>
It <b>was</b>	It <b>was not</b>	It <b>wasn't</b>	<b>Was it?</b>
We <b>were</b>	We <b>were not</b>	We <b>weren't</b>	<b>Were we?</b>
They <b>were</b>	They <b>were not</b>	They <b>weren't</b>	<b>Were they?</b>

## Short answers

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

## 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.

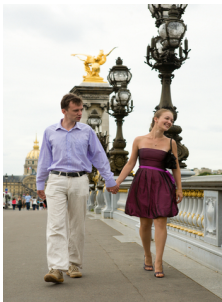
## Examples



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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