

## PAST SIMPLE

There are two principal past tenses used to make general statements about the past: The past simple and the past continuous. The two tenses are quite different. Use the past simple to talk about an event which happened at some point in time in the past.

- Tom flew to Chicago last week.
- Peter visited his friends in Florida two months ago.

## PAST SIMPLE STRUCTURE

### Positive

Subject + Verb + ed OR Irregular Past Form + Objects

I, You, He, She, We, They --> played golf yesterday afternoon.

I, You, He, She, We, They --> went lunch at noon.

### Negative

Subject + did not (didn't) + Verb + Objects

I, You, He, She, We, They --> didn't go on vacation last summer.

Subject + did not (doesn't) + Verb + Objects

### Questions

(Why, What, etc.) + did + Subject + Verb + Objects?

Did --> I, you, we, they --> attend the meeting last week?

## How is the simple past tense used?

The past tense describes an action that started and finished in the past.

However, if the action started in the past and continues to now, then we do not use the simple past tense.

Note that the action can be recent or a long time ago.

I **came** home late last night.

My grandparents **got married** fifty years ago.

Also note that the action can be short or long.

I **woke up** at 5:30 this morning.

I **lived** in Germany for 10 years.

A time expression may be used, but it isn't always necessary. In the below example, it's clear that Kate means breakfast *this morning*.

**Kate:** You look hungry. **Did** you **eat** breakfast?

**Josh:** No, I **didn't eat** breakfast. I **woke up** late. I **didn't have** time.

Most verbs can be changed to the past tense by adding -ed. These are called regular verbs.

However, some verbs are irregular. Their form changes. Here are a few examples:

**regular verbs:** move - moved / play - played / use - used

**irregular verbs:** buy - bought / eat - ate / see - saw

## **PAST CONTINUOUS**

### **PAST CONTINUOUS STRUCTURE**

#### **Positive**

Subject + conjugate the helping verb "be" + verb + -ing.

I was, You were, He was, She was, We were, You were, They were --> watching TV when I arrived.

#### **Negative**

Subject + conjugate the helping verb "be" + not + verb + -ing.

I wasn't, You weren't, He wasn't, She wasn't, We weren't, You weren't, They weren't --> working when he came into the room.

#### **Questions**

Question word + conjugate the helping verb 'be' + subject + verb + -ing

What --> were you, they --> doing at seven o'clock?

What --> was I, he, she --> doing at seven o'clock?

### **How is the past continuous tense used?**

The past continuous is usually used to refer to events happening at the same time that something important happened in the past.

- They were doing their homework when she arrived.
- Jack was studying while Dave was cooking dinner..

The past continuous is also used to express what was happening at a precise moment in the past.

- I was attending a lecture at 2.30 yesterday afternoon.
- Alice was reading a book at six yesterday evening.

## Important Notes!

The past continuous, and continuous forms in general, are used with action verbs such as talk, drive, play, etc. The continuous form is not used with state verbs such as 'be', 'seem', 'taste', etc. Some state verbs can be used as action verbs so there are some exceptions. For example: 'smell' - It smelled good. (static verb) / He was smelling the roses when she walked by the window. (action verb)

*He seemed very sad.*

*It tasted very bitter.*

*Jack didn't appear to be concerned.*

## IMPORTANT TIME EXPRESSIONS

These time expressions are commonly used with the past continuous to express a past action occurring at a specific moment in the past.

### At/At that Moment

'At' and 'at that moment' refer to a specific point of time in the past. These two expressions are often used with the past continuous. It is more common to use the past simple to speak in general, but if you want to express what was happening at a precise moment of time in the past, use the past continuous.

*She was having breakfast at 6.45 this morning.*

*We were working on his request at 10 pm.*

*Alan wasn't meeting with Tom at 9. He was meeting with Dennis.*

### When

'When' is used with the past simple to express an important event that occurred in the past. The past continuous is used to express what was happening at that moment.

*They were getting ready **when** he came home.*

*Alice wasn't thinking **when** she said that.*

*What were you doing **when** he asked the question?*

### While/As

'While' is used with the past continuous to express something that was happening at the same moment in time that something else was occurring or happened.

*I was typing **while** he was dictating.*

*Jackson was working while she was having a good time.*

***While/As** I was brushing my teeth, the telephone rang.*

## **During**

'During' is used with a noun or a noun phrase to express an event during which something was happening.

*She wasn't paying attention **during** the meeting/the time when she was at school.*