

07 The past simple

The past simple is used to talk about completed actions that happened at a fixed time in the past. It is the most commonly used past tense in English.

See also:

Past simple negative **8** Past simple questions **9**
Present perfect simple **11**

7.1 REGULAR VERBS IN THE PAST SIMPLE

To form a regular verb in the past simple, "-ed" is added to the base form.



TUESDAY



TODAY

Walter **washed** his car on Tuesday.

The verb ends in "-ed."

Fixed point in the past.

HOW TO FORM

Most verbs in the past simple do not change with the subject.



The same form is used for all subjects.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



Last night, I **watched** a documentary about Italy.

Heather **cleaned** her bedroom last weekend before the party.



Last Friday I **danced** with friends.

Tom **shaved** off his beard yesterday.



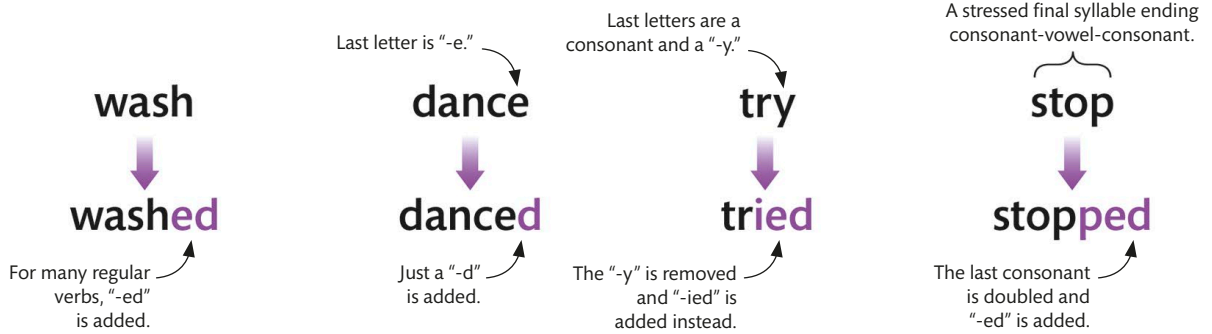
Tom usually drives to work, but yesterday he **walked** instead.

After work, Nia **listened** to music and **started** reading a new book.




7.2 SPELLING RULES FOR THE PAST SIMPLE

The past simple of all regular verbs ends in “-ed,” but for some verbs, there are some spelling changes, too.



FURTHER EXAMPLES



jump
↓
jumped



arrive
↓
arrived



carry
↓
carried



drop
↓
dropped



work
↓
worked



save
↓
saved



cry
↓
cried



hop
↓
hopped



play
↓
played



decide
↓
decided



hurry
↓
hurried





step
↓
stepped

7.3 IRREGULAR VERBS IN THE PAST SIMPLE

Some verbs do not take “-ed” to form the past simple. There are no specific rules about how to form irregular verbs in the past simple.

“Went” is the past simple of “go.”

I **went** swimming yesterday.



YESTERDAY → TODAY

COMMON IRREGULAR VERBS IN THE PAST SIMPLE

go	have	do	put	come	see
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
went	had	did	put	came	saw

FURTHER EXAMPLES

I **swam** in the 500m race.



Sam **ate** two pizzas.



I **came** to the US in 1980.



We **went** to the zoo last week.



We **saw** some rare birds.



They **drank** all the lemonade.



I **did** really well in school.



They **had** a great vacation.



Steve **put** his cup on the table.



Sheila **drove** to the park.



7.4 "BE" IN THE PAST SIMPLE

The past simple of "be" is completely irregular. It is the only verb in the past simple which changes depending on the subject.

The traffic **was** bad, so we **were** late to school.



PAST

NOW

HOW TO FORM

The past simple of "be" changes with the subject.

SUBJECT	"BE"	REST OF SENTENCE
I	was	late to school.
You	were	
He / She	was	
We / They	were	

FURTHER EXAMPLES

He **was** a doctor for 40 years.



We **were** at the library yesterday.



She **was** a Broadway star in the 1960s.



There **were** lots of people at the party.



There **was** a party last night.



They **were** at the movies last week.

