08 The past simple negative

The past simple negative is used to talk about things that did not happen in the past. It is always formed the same way, unless the main verb is "be."

8.1 THE PAST SIMPLE NEGATIVE

The past simple negative uses "did not" or "didn't" with the base form of the main verb. The main verb is not put into the past simple.

I **played** tennis last week, but I **didn't play** yesterday.

"played" is the past simple.

To make the negative, "didn't" is used with the base form.

LAST WEEK   YESTERDAY   TODAY

HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT	"DID NOT / DIDN'T"	BASE FORM OF VERB	REST OF SENTENCE
I	didn't	go	swimming.

"Didn't" or "did not" are used to make the negative, no matter what the subject is.

The base form of the main verb is used in the past simple negative.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

You **didn't like** the beach.

I **didn't eat** all the chocolate!

They **didn't buy** the big, expensive car.

Emily **didn't enjoy** the theme park as much as Zara.

"Did not" is only used for emphasis, or in formal situations.

She **did not talk** to anyone before the exam.

Hugh **did not cycle** to work today.

⚠ **COMMON MISTAKES** BASE FORMS IN THE PAST SIMPLE NEGATIVE

When using the negative form of the past simple, "didn't" plus the main
verb in the base form is used. The main verb is never in the past simple.

"Play" should be in
the base form.

The main verb should only go into the
past simple if it's a positive statement.
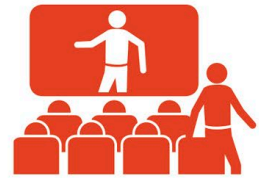
I **didn't play** tennis last night. ✅   I **didn't played** tennis last night. ❌
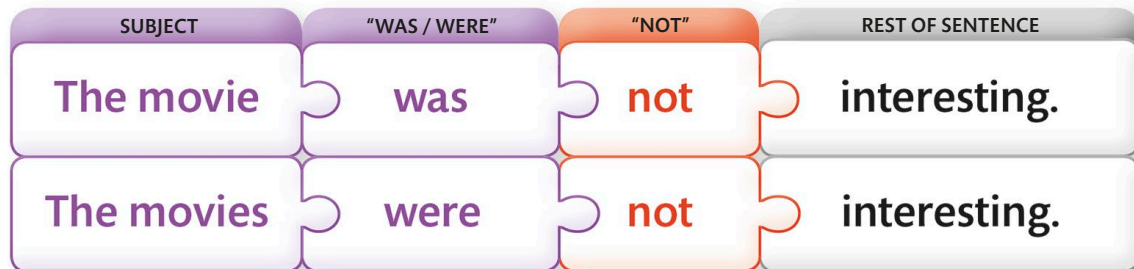

8.2 **THE PAST SIMPLE NEGATIVE OF "BE"**

To form the past simple negative of "be,"
"not" is added after "was" or "were."

The book **was** interesting, but the movie **was not**.

The books **were** great, but the movies **were not**.

HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT	"WAS / WERE"	"NOT"	REST OF SENTENCE
The movie	was	not	interesting.
The movies	were	not	interesting.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Kate was **not** feeling well.

My parents were **not** pleased.

The cat was**n't** in the house.

The computers were**n't** working.

"Was not" is often
shortened to "wasn't."

"Were not" is often
shortened to "weren't."