

Simple Past

FORM

[VERB+ed] or [irregular verbs](#)

Examples:

- You **called** Debbie.
- **Did** you **call** Debbie?
- You **did not call** Debbie.

[Complete List of Simple Past Forms](#)

USE 1 Completed Action in the Past



Use the Simple Past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past. Sometimes, the speaker may not actually mention the specific time, but they do have one specific time in mind.

Examples:

- I **saw** a movie yesterday.
- I **didn't see** a play yesterday.
- Last year, I **traveled** to Japan.
- Last year, I **didn't travel** to Korea.
- **Did** you **have** dinner last night?
- She **washed** her car.
- He **didn't wash** his car.

USE 2 A Series of Completed Actions



We use the Simple Past to list a series of completed actions in the past. These actions happen 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on.

Examples:

- I **finished** work, **walked** to the beach, and **found** a nice place to swim.
- He **arrived** from the airport at 8:00, **checked** into the hotel at 9:00, and **met** the others at 10:00.
- **Did** you **add** flour, **pour** in the milk, and then **add** the eggs?

USE 3 Duration in Past



The Simple Past can be used with a duration which starts and stops in the past. A duration is a longer action often indicated by expressions such as: for two years, for five minutes, all day, all year, etc.

Examples:

- I **lived** in Brazil for two years.
- Shauna **studied** Japanese for five years.
- They **sat** at the beach all day.
- They **did not stay** at the party the entire time.
- We **talked** on the phone for thirty minutes.
- A: How long **did** you **wait** for them?
B: We **waited** for one hour.

USE 4 Habits in the Past



The Simple Past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past. It can have the same meaning as "used to." To make it clear that we are talking about a habit, we often add expressions such as: always, often, usually, never, when I was a child, when I was younger, etc.

Examples:

- I **studied** French when I was a child.
- He **played** the violin.
- He **didn't play** the piano.
- **Did** you **play** a musical instrument when you were a kid?
- She **worked** at the movie theater after school.
- They never **went** to school, they always **skipped** class.

USE 5 Past Facts or Generalizations



The Simple Past can also be used to describe past facts or generalizations which are no longer true. As in USE 4 above, this use of the Simple Past is quite similar to the expression "used to."

Examples:

- She **was** shy as a child, but now she is very outgoing.
- He **didn't like** tomatoes before.
- **Did you live** in Texas when you **were** a kid?
- People **paid** much more to make cell phone calls in the past.

IMPORTANT When-Clauses Happen First

Clauses are groups of words which have meaning but are often not complete sentences. Some clauses begin with the word "when" such as "when I dropped my pen..." or "when class began..." These clauses are called when-clauses, and they are very important. The examples below contain when-clauses.

Examples:

- **When I paid her one dollar**, she answered my question.
- She answered my question **when I paid her one dollar**.

When-clauses are important because they always happen first when both clauses are in the Simple Past. Both of the examples above mean the same thing: first, I paid her one dollar, and then, she answered my question. It is not important whether "when I paid her one dollar" is at the beginning of the sentence or at the end of the sentence. However, the example below has a different meaning. First, she answered my question, and then, I paid her one dollar.

Example:

- I paid her one dollar **when she answered my question**.

ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

- You **just** called Debbie.
- Did you **just** call Debbie?

ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

- Tom **repaired** the car. *ACTIVE*
- The car **was repaired** by Tom. *PASSIVE*

[More About Active / Passive Forms](#)