



# Past Tenses

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# Past tense

- The past tense in English is used:
  - to talk about the **past**
  - to talk about **hypotheses** (when we imagine something)
  - for **politeness**.



There are four past tense forms in English:

Past simple:	<i>I worked</i>
Past continuous:	<i>I was working</i>
Past perfect:	<i>I had worked</i>
Past perfect continuous:	<i>I had been working</i>



We use these forms:

- To talk about the **past**:

*He **worked** at McDonald's. He **had worked** there since July.*

*He **was working** at McDonald's. He **had been working** there since July.*

- To refer to **the present or future in hypotheses**:

*It **might be dangerous**. Suppose they **got lost**.*


- This use is very common in **wishes**:

***I wish it wasn't** so cold.*

- And in conditions with **if**:

*He **could get a new job if** he really **tried**.*

***If Jack was playing**, they would probably win.*

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- For hypotheses, wishes and conditions in the past, we use the past perfect:
    - *It was very dangerous. What if you **had got** lost?*
    - *I wish I **hadn't spent** so much money last month.*
    - *I would have helped him if he **had asked**.*
  - and also to talk about the present in a few **polite expressions**:
    - *Excuse me, **I was wondering if** this was the train for York.*
    - ***I just hoped** you would be able to help me.*



# Past Simple

- ▶ With most verbs, the past tense is formed by adding *-ed*
- ▶ But there are a lot of irregular past tense forms in English.



We use the past tense to talk about:

- Something that happened **once in the past**:

*I **met** my wife in 1983.*

*We **went** to Spain for our holidays.*

*They **got** home very late last night.*

- Something that happened **several times in the past**:

*When I was a boy, I **walked** a mile to school every day.*

*We **swam** a lot while we were on holiday.*

*They always **enjoyed** visiting their friends.*

- Something that was **true for some time in the past**:

*I **lived** abroad for ten years.*

*He **enjoyed** being a student.*

*She **played** a lot of tennis when she was younger.*

- We often use **expressions with ago** with the past simple:

*I **met** my wife **a long time ago**.*

# Past simple questions and negatives

- ▶ We use **did** to make questions with the past simple:

**Did** she **play** tennis when she was younger?

**Did** you **live** abroad?

When **did** you **meet** your wife?

Where **did** you **go** for your holidays?

- ▶ But questions with *who* often don't use *did*:

**Who discovered** penicillin?

**Who wrote** Don Quixote?



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- ▶ We use **didn't (did not)** to make **negatives** with the past simple:

They **didn't go** to Spain this year.

We **didn't get** home until very late last night.

I **didn't see** you yesterday.



# Past continuous

- The past continuous is made from **the past tense of the verb be** and the **-ing form** of a verb.



We use the past continuous to talk about the past:

1 The Past Continuous expresses a past activity that has duration.

I met her while I **was living** in Paris.

You **were making** a lot of noise last night.

What **were you doing**?

2 The activity began *before* the action expressed by the Past Simple.

She **was making** coffee when we arrived.

When I phoned Simon he **was having** dinner.

3 The Past Continuous expresses an activity in progress before, and probably after, a time in the past.

When I woke up this morning, the sun **was shining**.

What **were you doing** at 8.00 last night?

# Past Simple and Past Continuous

- 1 The Past Simple expresses past actions as simple facts.  
I **did** my homework last night.  
'What **did** you **do** yesterday evening?' 'I **watched** TV.'
- 2 The Past Continuous gives past activities time and duration. The activity can be interrupted.  
'What **were** you **doing** at 8.00?' 'I **was watching** TV.'  
I **was doing** my homework when Jane arrived.
- 3 In stories, the Past Continuous can describe the scene. The Past Simple tells the action.  
It was a beautiful day. The sun **was shining** and the birds **were singing**, so we **decided** to go for a picnic. We **put** everything in the car ...
- 4 The questions below refer to different time periods. The Past Continuous asks about activities before, and the Past Simple asks about what happened after.

What were you doing What did you do	when it started to rain?	We were playing tennis. We went home.
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# Prepositions in time expressions

<b>at</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>no preposition</b>
at six o'clock at midnight at Christmas at the weekend	in the morning/afternoon/evening in December in summer in 1995 in two weeks' time	today yesterday tomorrow the day after tomorrow the day before yesterday last night last week two weeks ago next month yesterday evening tomorrow evening this evening tonight
<b>on</b>		
on Saturday on Monday morning on Christmas Day on January 18		