

9.3 The simple past tense

9.3A The past form and pronunciation of regular verbs [> LEG 9.14, App 39]

Study:

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- 1 Regular verbs always end with a *-d* in the simple past, but we do not always pronounce the *-d* ending in the same way. We usually add *-ed* to the base form of the verb:
I play – I played, I open – I opened. We do not pronounce *-ed* as an extra syllable. We pronounce it as /d/: *I played /pleɪd/* Not * /pleɪ-ɪd/ *; *I opened /əʊpənd/* Not * /əʊpənɪd/ *;
I arrived /əraɪvd/ Not * /əraɪvɪd/ *; *I married /mæɪrɪd/* Not * /mæɪrɪ-ɪd/ * [compare > 2.5A].
- 2 Verbs which end in the following sounds are pronounced /t/ in the past: /k/ *packed*; /s/ *passed*; /tʃ/ *watched*; /ʃ/ *washed*; /f/ *laughed*; /p/ *tipped*.
- 3 A few verbs are pronounced and spelt /d/ or /t/: *burned/burnt, dreamed/dreamt*.
- 4 Verbs ending in the sounds /t/ or /d/ have their past ending pronounced /ɪd/:
added, decided, counted, excited, needed, posted, shouted, started, tasted, wanted.

Write:

- a Give the past forms of these regular verbs.
- b Show whether you would pronounce these past forms as /d/, /t/ or /ɪd/.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 We <i>waited</i> an hour yesterday. (wait) /ɪd/ | 10 I TV all evening. (watch) / / |
| 2 Joan her room on Friday. (clean) / / | 11 We when we saw them. (laugh) / / |
| 3 I squash last night. (play) / / | 12 He the sergeant's orders. (obey) / / |
| 4 She my letter yesterday. (post) / / | 13 We into the house. (hurry) / / |
| 5 I at her. (smile) / / | 14 You to me! (lie) / / |
| 6 She when she saw me. (stop) / / | 15 I early yesterday. (finish) / / |
| 7 I of you last night. (dream) / / | 16 It's in the bill. (include) / / |
| 8 Who the cakes? (burn) / / | 17 I the door before I left. (lock) / / |
| 9 He a lot as a baby. (cry) / / | 18 We first class. (travel) / / |

9.3B Irregular past forms [> LEG 9.15-16, App 40]

Study:

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- 1 Some irregular verbs have the same form in all parts: *hit-hit-hit, cut-cut-cut*.
- 2 Some change one part only: *keep-kept-kept, make-made-made, sell-sold-sold*.
- 3 Some change two parts: *break-broke-broken, know-knew-known, ride-rode-ridden*.

Write:

Supply the past forms of the irregular verbs in italics.

- 1 I often see Giulio. I *saw* him again only yesterday.
- 2 As teenagers, we always each other very well. We still *understand* each other now.
- 3 I hardly Ray's wife. Did you *know* her at all?
- 4 We always *meet* on Sunday. We last Sunday as usual.
- 5 I often *find* things on the beach. I this very old bottle yesterday.
- 6 Someone's always *leaving* that window open. Who it open this time?
- 7 I a lot of letters when I was young. I hardly ever *write* letters now.
- 8 They *sell* all kinds of rubbish now, but they once good handmade furniture.
- 9 She *is* very good at figures, you know. She first in maths at school.
- 10 I *have* the same car now that I five years ago.
- 11 I don't *keep* pets now, but I a dog when I was a boy.
- 12 Where did you *eat* last night? – We at a restaurant.

9.3C Uses of the simple past tense: 'I worked/he worked' [> LEG 9.17-18]

Study:
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We use the **simple past** to talk about events, actions or situations which happened in the past and are now finished. We always have to say (or imply) **when** the action happened, so we often use time references like *yesterday, ago, last summer* [> 7.2A].

We use the past:

– to describe actions which happened in the recent or distant past:

*Sam **phoned a moment ago**.* (Not **Sam has phoned**) [> 9.5A]

*The Goths **invaded Rome in A.D. 410**.* (Not **The Goths had invaded**) [> 9.6]

– to describe past habit: *I **smoked forty cigarettes a day** till I gave up.* [compare > 11.11]

If we do not use time references (*a moment ago, when I was young, etc.*) we imply them:

*I **saw** Fred in town.* (i.e. when I was there this morning)

*I **never met** my grandfather.* (i.e. perhaps he died before I was born)

Write: Give complete answers to these questions using the time references in brackets.

1 How long ago did you work as a civil servant? (five years ago)

I worked as a civil servant five years ago......

2 When did you last play football? (when I was 14)

.....

3 When did the Carters leave for their summer holiday? (last night)

.....

4 What time did John arrive? (at 4)

.....

5 When did you last see 'Gone with the Wind'? (recently)

.....

6 How long did you wait at the airport? (till they arrived)

.....

7 When did Sally tell you about her engagement? (when she was here)

.....

9.3D Context

Write: Put in the correct forms of the simple past tense of the verbs in brackets.



... red eyes and green scaly skin

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Christopher Davis, a young driver from South Carolina, (*claim*)

1 *claimed* a monster (*attack*) 2 him while he was

driving along a lonely road. The monster (*be*) 3 seven

feet tall and (*have*) 4 red eyes and green, scaly skin. It

(*chase*) 5 Christopher's car and (*jump*)

6 on the roof. Many people (*believe*) 7 the

story and the newspapers (*call*) 8 the monster

'Lizardman'. Seventy hunters recently (*set out*) 9 to trap

Lizardman and a local radio (*offer*) 10 \$1 million to anyone

who (*capture*) 11 him dead or alive. Lizardman had so

much publicity that thousands of people (*visit*) 12 South

Carolina to find him. No one has found him yet. As everyone knows,

monsters may or may not exist, but they are very good for the tourist

industry!

9.4 The simple past and past progressive tenses

9.4A Irregular verbs with the same form in the present as in the past: 'put/put' [> LEG 9.16]

Study:
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A small number of irregular verbs have the same form in the present as in the past: e.g. *burst/burst, cost/cost, cut/cut, hit/hit, put/put*. We have to remember, especially with such verbs, that the third person singular does not change in the past:

He put on a clean shirt yesterday. (past) He puts on a clean shirt every day. (present)

After *I, you, we, and they*, the context or the adverbial tells us the tense:

I put on a clean shirt yesterday. (past) I put on a clean shirt every day. (present)

Write: Do these sentences refer to the present or the past? Write 'present' or 'past'.
In a few cases both references are possible.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 That shirt cost me £7.00. <i>past</i> | 8 She often hit him. |
| 2 He often cuts himself. | 9 He shut the door with a bang. |
| 3 She hurt her arm. | 10 I hurt my arm yesterday. |
| 4 He let me drive his car. | 11 I often let him drive my car. |
| 5 She reads a lot. | 12 She always beat him at tennis. |
| 6 I set the table every morning. | 13 The BBC broadcasts every day. |
| 7 I set the table an hour ago. | 14 The BBC broadcast the talk yesterday. |

9.4B Uses of the past progressive tense: 'I was working' [> LEG 9.20]

Study:
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There are five basic uses of the **past progressive tense**. We use it for:

- Temporary actions in progress in the past: *I was living abroad in 1987*.
We often use *all* to emphasize continuity (*all day, all summer*): *It was raining all night*.
- Actions which were in progress when something else happened:
Just as/When I was leaving, the phone rang.
These are often introduced by conjunctions like *when, as, just as* and *while*, but the shorter action can be introduced by *when*: *We were having supper when the phone rang*.
- Actions in progress at the same time: *While I was reading, Joan was playing the piano*.
- Repeated actions with e.g. *always*: *When I worked here, I was always making mistakes*.
- Polite inquiries: *I was wondering if you could give me a lift*.

Write: Use the past progressive in the sentences below.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 I ... <i>was not listening</i> ... , so I missed what he said. (not listen) | 8 when I left? (you still work) |
| 2 We stayed because we ourselves. (enjoy) | 9 I lived in France at the time you in Spain. (live) |
| 3 tennis yesterday? (they play) | 10 When she was younger, she things for other people. (always do) |
| 4 He all weekend. (garden) | 11 Bill and Sue their house, before they moved. (constantly improve) |
| 5 television all evening? (you watch) | 12 when I rang you? (you read) |
| 6 It hard all day. (rain) | 13 Just as I to an interesting part of the story, the doorbell rang. (get) |
| 7 I whether you could lend me some money. (wonder) | |