

## Explanations

### Past simple: form

- Regular verbs

Past simple regular verbs add *-ed* to the bare infinitive. Verbs ending in *-e* simply add *-d*.

*I enjoyed the film. I loved the music.*

All persons have the same form.

- Spelling problems

Verbs ending in consonant + *-y* change *-y* to *-ie*.

*try tried cry cried*

Verbs ending with one vowel and one consonant double the final consonant.

*regret regretted fit fitted*

- Irregular verbs

The most common irregular verbs are listed on page 277. It is necessary to learn these forms.

*eat ate drink drank wake woke*

- Questions

Questions are formed with *did* and the bare infinitive.

*Did you enjoy the film? Did you drink all the milk?*

*What did you do yesterday? Why did she leave?*

- Negatives

Negatives are formed with *did not* and the bare infinitive. This is contracted to *didn't* in speech and informal writing.

*The coat didn't fit me. Carol didn't eat very much.*

### Past simple: meaning

- The past simple is used to describe actions and states in a completed period of time. We know when the action happened, so a definite time expression can be used.

*I enjoyed the film we saw last night.*

*We listened to some new CDs yesterday afternoon.*

- The past simple is also used to describe habitual actions in the past.

*Every day we got up early and went to the beach.*

Past continuous:  
form

- The past continuous is formed with the past of the auxiliary verb *be* and the *-ing* form of the main verb.

*I was sitting by the door.      You were laughing.      He/She was driving.*  
*We were crying.      They were eating.*

- Questions

*Yes/No* questions are formed by inverting the subject and the auxiliary verb *be*.

*Was I sleeping?      Were you waiting?      Was he/she driving?*  
*Were we writing?      Were they leaving?*

*Wh-* questions follow the same pattern.

*What were you writing?      Why were they waiting?*

- Negatives

Negatives are formed with the verb auxiliary verb *be* + *not*. This is contracted in speech and informal writing.

*I wasn't listening.      He wasn't playing.      They weren't looking.*

Past continuous:  
meaning

- The past continuous is used to describe a situation in progress in the past. This is often contrasted with a sudden event in the past simple.

<u>Background situation</u>	<u>Sudden event</u>
<i>I was having my lunch</i>	<i>when Ruth phoned.</i>
<i>While I was waiting for the bus,</i>	<i>I met Karen.</i>

- The past continuous can be used to describe several situations in progress, happening at the same time.

*While James was cooking, David was phoning a friend.*  
*The airport was full of people. Some were sleeping on benches, some were shopping, others were reading. Everyone was waiting for news of the delayed plane.*

Time expressions

- With the past simple

*I arrived here two hours ago/in September/last week/at 6.00.*  
*Helen lived in Madrid for three years.*

- With the past continuous

We can use *when* or *while* with the past continuous to mean 'during the time that'.

*While we were waiting for the train, it started to rain.*  
*I cut my finger when I was peeling the potatoes.*

But if we mean 'at the time that' then we only use *when* with the past simple.

*She was very happy when she got her exam results.*

→ SEE ALSO  
Grammar 7: Present perfect 2  
Grammar 32: Time expressions

# Practice

**1** Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

- a) While I *washed/was washing* my hair, the phone *rang/ringed*.
- b) How *did you felt/did you feel* yesterday afternoon?
- c) When I *got/was getting* home I *received/was receiving* a phone call.
- d) Last summer I *was going swimming/went swimming* every weekend.
- e) When the dog *bit/was biting* Laura's leg, she *screamed/was screaming*.
- f) We *sang/sung* some songs and then *ate/eat* some sandwiches.
- g) When you *fell/felt* over the cliff, what *happened/was happening* next?
- h) While Mary *washed-up/was washing-up*, she *broke/was breaking* a cup.
- i) I didn't *see/saw* where the bus stop was, so I *was missing/missed* the bus.
- j) What *did you do/were you doing* when I *phoned/was phoning* you last night?  
There was no reply.

**2** Rewrite each sentence according to the instructions given.

- a) I enjoyed the concert. (negative) *I didn't enjoy the concert.*
- b) You ate all the bread. (question) .....
- c) Did John spend a lot? (affirmative) .....
- d) I felt well yesterday. (negative) .....
- e) Anna didn't buy a car. (affirmative) .....
- f) They won the prize. (question) .....
- g) Paul doesn't speak Greek. (affirmative) .....
- h) I paid all the bills. (negative) .....

**3** Complete each sentence with a suitable time expression from the box. You can use an expression more than once.

ago
in
last week
at
when
while

- a) A burglar broke into the house ..... *while* ..... we were watching television.
- b) ..... I met an old friend of mine in the city centre.
- c) What were you doing ..... the police officer knocked on the door?
- d) Jan met Sarah ..... half-past eight outside the cinema.
- e) ..... Dick was preparing lunch, he cut his finger badly.
- f) I first came to this town more than twenty years .....
- g) Jeff was studying to be a doctor ..... he met Sally.
- h) Tony bought his first motorbike ..... 1992.
- i) ..... did you start playing basketball?
- j) Most of the young people left this village a long time .....

**4 Match each sentence (a–h) with a suitable response (1–8).**

- a) What was Katrina doing when you knocked on the door? ....<sup>3</sup>.....
- b) How did Brenda spend her holiday? .....
- c) What happened when the lights went out? .....
- d) When did you meet Cathy? .....
- e) What did Julie do when Tony called? .....
- f) Did Suzannah hear what David said? .....
- g) What did Lucy do when the bell rang at the end of the lesson? .....
- h) Why did Alicia leave so early? .....

- 1 She went sailing most days, and sunbathed at the beach.
- 2 She put the phone down.
- 3 She was listening to the radio in the kitchen.
- 4 She went to meet her parents at a restaurant.
- 5 She came to my brother's birthday party.
- 6 While Tina was looking for a torch, they came back on.
- 7 She wasn't listening.
- 8 She put her books away and left.

**5 Put each verb in brackets into either the past simple or past continuous.**

- a) When Harry (wake up) ..... *woke up* ....., we (tell) ..... *told* ..... him the news.
- b) Everyone (wait) ..... for the concert to begin when a message (arrive) .....
- c) Charlotte (want) ..... a relaxing holiday, so she (choose) ..... to stay on a small island.
- d) When Roberto (study) ..... in America, his parents (phone) ..... him every week.
- e) I (find) ..... my pen while I (look for) ..... my bag.
- f) Ann (watch) ..... a film on television when Julie (arrive) .....
- g) When the lights (go out) ....., I (lie) ..... in bed reading.
- h) When you (go) ..... to the new Chinese restaurant, what (you eat) ..... ?

## Explanations

### Past perfect: form

- The past perfect is formed with the auxiliary *had* and the past participle (third column in verb tables). The past participles of irregular verbs are listed on page 277.

*I had decided. She had left. We had eaten.*

In speech and informal writing these forms are contracted to:

*I'd decided. She'd left. We'd eaten.*

- Questions and negatives

Questions are formed by inverting the subject and *had*. Negatives are formed with *not* and contractions are used.

*Had she left?*

*She had not left. She hadn't left.*

### Past perfect: meaning

- The past perfect is used to show clearly that one past event happened before another past event. We use the past perfect for the earlier event.

*Sue left at 7.00. We arrived at her house at 8.30.*

→ *When we arrived at Sue's house, she had left.*

It is not necessary to use the past perfect if we use *before* or *after* to make the time sequence clear, although many speakers do so to show a strong connection between the two events.

*Sue left her house before we arrived.*

OR *Sue had left her house before we arrived.*

*We arrived at Sue's house after she left.*

OR *We arrived at Sue's house after she had left.*

- Note that it is not necessary to use the past perfect just because an event happened a long time ago. We use past simple.

*The Chinese built the Great Wall over two thousand years ago.*

### Past perfect: common uses

- The past perfect is often used with verbs of thinking like *think, know, be sure, realize, remember, suspect, understand* etc.

*I thought I'd seen the film before, but I hadn't.*

*David knew he'd seen her somewhere before.*

*Ellen was sure she hadn't locked the door.*

*When I got home I realized I'd lost my wallet.*

*The inspector suspected that the thief had used a special key.*

*used to*

- *Used to* describes a habit or state in the past. There is no present form. *Used to* suggests that the action or situation is no longer true and so makes a contrast with the present.

*I used to have long hair when I was younger.*

It is used for repeated actions and not for single events.

*I used to play tennis, but now I play football.*

- Questions and negatives

With questions and negatives *used to* becomes *use to*.

*Did you use to have long hair when you were younger?*

*I didn't use to play tennis, but now I play most weekends.*

- Pronunciation

*Used* is pronounced /ju:st/. This is different from the past tense of the verb *use*, pronounced /ju:zd/.

*would*

*Would* is used in the same way as *used to*, but it only describes repeated actions in the past, not states. It is more common in descriptive writing than in speech.

*On winter days, we would/used to all sit around the fire and tell stories.*

*I used to own a motorbike. (NOT ~~I would own a motorbike.~~)*

Past perfect and past simple

- Study the situations and the example sentences:

Situation 1: the film starts at 8.00, I arrive at 7.50.

a) **I arrived** at 7.50, just before the film **started**.

b) When the film **started**, **I had** already **arrived** ten minutes before.

Situation 2: the film starts at 8.00, I arrive at 8.10.

a) The film **started** at 8.00, but **I arrived** ten minutes late.

b) **I arrived** at 8.10, but the film **had** already **started**.

To describe these situations it is possible to use the past simple for both verbs, as in 1a) and 2a). It is also possible to put the event that happened first into the past perfect, as in 1b) and 2b).

However, 1a) is more simple and much more likely than 1b). In 1b) we emphasize which event happened first (me arriving) – but arriving first is normal when we go to the cinema so we don't need to emphasize it.

In situation 2 both a) and b) are possible. 2a) is simple and easy to use and understand. But 2b) helps the meaning by emphasizing which event happened first (the film starting).

Past forms used in conditionals

- Note that the past simple and past perfect are also used in conditional sentences (*If ...*). In these sentences they have a different meaning.

→ SEE ALSO

**Grammar 13: Conditionals 1**  
**Grammar 14: Conditionals 2**

## Practice

### 1 Underline the errors in these sentences. Rewrite each sentence.

a) When we had ate lunch, we were sitting in the garden.

*When we had eaten lunch, we sat in the garden.*

b) While I looked for my keys, I remembered I left them at home.

c) Anna had used to play badminton when she had been at school.

d) When I got into bed, I was falling asleep immediately.

e) When I was finally finding the house, I was knocking at the door.

f) After Jill was giving Nick his books, she went home.

g) Maria would live in Sweden when she was a child.

h) I was using to get up early when I had gone sailing.

i) The Vikings had sailed to North America a thousand years ago.

j) Juliet was sure she was seeing the tall man before.

### 2 Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

a) While I *had waited/was waiting/waited* at the bus stop, I *had noticed/was noticing/noticed* a new shop which *wasn't/hadn't been* in the street the day before.

b) I *had gone/went* out into the garden to fetch my bike, but *found/was finding* that someone *stole/had stolen* it.

c) When George *met/was meeting* Diane at the party, he *thought/was thinking* that he *saw/had seen/was seeing* her somewhere before.

d) Emily *got off/was getting off* the bus, and *walked/was walking* into the bank when she *realized/had realized/was realizing* that she *left/had left/was leaving* her handbag on the bus.

e) After I *was buying/had bought* my new computer, I discovered that I *wasn't having/didn't have* enough memory.

f) I went to the post office to ask about my package, but they *had said/said* that it still *hadn't arrived/didn't arrive*.

- 3 Put each verb given into the past simple, past continuous or past perfect. More than one answer may be possible.



The police suspected that Brian (a) *had broken*..... (break) the window at his house because he (b) ..... (want) to make them think that a burglar (c) ..... (steal) his valuable stamp collection. They (d) ..... (think) that Brian (e) ..... (do) this because he (f) ..... (need) the money. However, they (g) ..... (not know) that Brian (h) ..... (fly) to Brazil the week before, and (i) ..... (be) abroad when the burglary (j) ..... (take place).

- 4 Complete each sentence, using *would* or *used to* and the verb in brackets. More than one answer may be possible.

- a) Jack (have) *used to have*..... a beard but he shaved it off.
- b) My mother (read) ..... to me every night.
- c) In the holidays we (meet) ..... at the beach every morning.
- d) I (not like) ..... spinach, but now I do.
- e) Helen (write) ..... to me often, but now she phones.
- f) Tina (live) ..... in the house opposite.
- g) When I was young, the summers (be) ..... warmer.
- h) Whenever our teacher let us leave early, we (cheer) ..... !



**5** For each question, complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using no more than three words.

- a) Michael took a deep breath and dived into the water.  
After Michael *had taken* ..... a deep breath, he dived into the water.
- b) Terry was fatter.  
Terry ..... to be so thin.
- c) Gary was sure his keys were not in his pocket.  
Gary was sure ..... his keys.
- d) When he was younger David played tennis.  
David ..... tennis when he was younger.
- e) Last summer, Julia got up early every morning.  
Last summer, Julia used to ..... early every morning.
- f) We missed the bus so we took a taxi.  
We took a taxi because ..... the bus.
- g) In those days, we spent the summer in the mountains.  
In those days, we ..... the summer in the mountains.

**6** Combine the two sentences to make one sentence. Use *when* and the past perfect.

- a) I washed and got ready. I went out to meet my friends.  
*When I'd washed and got ready, I went out to meet my friends.* .....
- b) I knew much more about the job. I visited their offices.  
.....  
.....
- c) I looked at the new dress for ages. I asked how much it cost.  
.....  
.....
- d) I felt much more independent. I passed my driving test.  
.....  
.....
- e) Anne went on holiday. She saved enough money.  
.....  
.....
- f) The team finally won the match. They ran round the pitch to celebrate.  
.....  
.....