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The past tense

The missing garden journal





Grammar at a glance

When you want to...	Form to use	Worked example
Finish a past event	base + -ed for regular verbs	We packed the bags yesterday.
Use an irregular past	take / took	Noor took the early train.
Ask or negate	did + base verb	Did Noor take it? She did not take it.
Set a past scene	was or were + description	The bags were heavy. The gate was shut.

SELECT A ROW TO OPEN ITS LESSON

p. 6 Simple and continuous
p. 7 Perfect and perfect continuous

THE PAST TENSE

Move a completed action into the past



The team's usual watering plan is safe, but yesterday's notes are scattered. Separate what happens regularly from what happened on that finished day.

Use the past simple for a completed past event. Most regular verbs add -ed, and a verb ending in e usually just adds d.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
The usual plan	Lily waters the plants every morning.	Waters describes a routine. This is not a report of one finished day.
Yesterday's record	Lily watered the plants yesterday.	Watered places this completed action in the past.
Another example	We packed the bags yesterday.	Finish a past event. Pattern: base + -ed for regular verbs.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Sam carried a pot. Lily moved a bench.

Does wet soil prove "Lily watered yesterday"?

No. It suggests water is present, but a record or other evidence must establish the person and past time. Grammar should not invent missing facts.

YOUR TURN

"Sam ___ the gate last night."

closed / closeed

> **Answer • closed**
> Close adds d.

THE PAST TENSE

Some verbs do not take -ed

Sam's notes say he went to the shed, saw a bag and took out the seeds. These important clues use past forms that do not follow the -ed pattern.

Irregular past forms need their own spelling. Go becomes went and come becomes came.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
A usual trip	Sam goes to the shed every day.	Goes describes the regular trip.
Yesterday's trip	Sam went to the shed yesterday.	Go has the irregular past form went, not goed.
What he found	Sam saw a bag and took out the seeds.	See becomes saw; take becomes took. Each verb reports a completed action.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Base verbs	Past forms
go · see · take	went · saw · took

Can all unfamiliar past forms be guessed by adding ed?

No. Irregular verbs need checking and practice in meaningful sentences. Some even keep the same written form, such as put to put.

YOUR TURN

"Lily ___ home before sunset yesterday."

comed / came

> Answer • came
> Come becomes came.

THE PAST TENSE

Did takes the past; the action verb stays simple

Lily remembers a bag but not who moved it. Ask questions and rule out events that did not happen. Do not put the past tense on both verbs.

After did or did not, use the base verb. Did already places the event in the past.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
A witness statement	Sam moved the bag.	Moved carries the past tense in this statement.
Ask the witness	Did Sam move the bag?	Did carries the past tense. Move returns to its base form.
Rule it out	Sam did not move the bag.	After did not, use move, not moved.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Past helper	Subject	Base action	Destination
Did	Lily	go	to the shed?

Does the base form after did change the event to the present?

No. Did establishes the past. Base forms appear in many structures and do not by themselves specify present time.

YOUR TURN

“Did they ___ the sign?”

make / made

> **Answer • make**
> Did takes a base action verb.

THE PAST TENSE

Was, were and a clear sequence

The team knows the actions. Now add where everyone was and how the events connect. A useful report describes states as well as actions without inventing missing facts.

Use was with I, he, she and it. Use were with you, we and they. Time words can make the order of events clear.

USE	EXAMPLE	WHAT TO NOTICE
One witness	Lily was in the garden yesterday.	Use was with I, he, she, it and singular noun subjects.
Two witnesses	Sam and Lily were in the garden yesterday.	Use were with you, we, they and plural subjects.
Check the location	Was Lily in the garden yesterday?	Be makes its own question: move was before Lily. Do not add did.

HOW THE PATTERN WORKS

Singular past state
The gate was locked.

Plural past state
The helpers were outside.

Completed actions
They found the key and opened the gate.

Does “The gate was locked” prove Sam locked it?

No. A state can be known without knowing the person who caused it. Report only what the evidence supplies.

YOUR TURN

“The gardeners ___ tired last night.”
were / was

> Answer • were
> Gardeners is plural.

VERB FORM REFERENCE / 1 OF 2

Simple and continuous

Follow one writer through three time frames. Read across each row to see how a statement becomes a negative or a question.

FORM AND USE	STATEMENT	NEGATIVE	QUESTION
base verb; he/she/it adds -s • A regular activity			
Present simple	Noor writes every day.	Noor does not write every day.	Does Noor write every day?
am/is/are + -ing • An activity in progress now			
Present continuous	Noor is writing now.	Noor is not writing now.	Is Noor writing now?
past form; did + base in questions • A completed event at a finished time			
Past simple	Noor wrote yesterday.	Noor did not write yesterday.	Did Noor write yesterday?
was/were + -ing • An activity in progress at a past point			
Past continuous	Noor was writing at noon.	Noor was not writing at noon.	Was Noor writing at noon?
will + base verb • An expectation about a later event			
Future with will	Noor will write tomorrow.	Noor will not write tomorrow.	Will Noor write tomorrow?
will be + -ing • An activity in progress at a future point			
Future continuous	Noor will be writing at noon.	Noor will not be writing at noon.	Will Noor be writing at noon?

BUILD THE VERB GROUP

Simple statements use write, writes or wrote. In negatives and questions, do, does or did takes the tense and write stays in its base form. Continuous forms use be + writing.

VERB FORM REFERENCE / 2 OF 2

Perfect and perfect continuous

A perfect form looks back from a reference point. Compare a completed result with time spent on an activity.

FORM AND USE	STATEMENT	NEGATIVE	QUESTION
have/has + past participle • A result connected to now			
Present perfect	Noor has written the note.	Noor has not written the note.	Has Noor written the note?
have/has been + -ing • Activity over a period up to now			
Present perfect continuous	Noor has been writing since ten.	Noor has not been writing since ten.	Has Noor been writing since ten?
had + past participle • Completion before a past reference point			
Past perfect	Noor had written it by noon.	Noor had not written it by noon.	Had Noor written it by noon?
had been + -ing • Ongoing activity up to a past point			
Past perfect continuous	By noon, Noor had been writing for an hour.	By noon, Noor had not been writing for an hour.	Had Noor been writing for an hour by noon?
will have + past participle • Completion by a future reference point			
Future perfect	Noor will have written it by Friday.	Noor will not have written it by Friday.	Will Noor have written it by Friday?
will have been + -ing • Duration measured at a future point			
Future perfect continuous	By noon, Noor will have been writing for an hour.	By noon, Noor will not have been writing for an hour.	Will Noor have been writing for an hour by noon?

BUILD THE VERB GROUP

Perfect = have + written. Perfect continuous = have + been + writing. Change the first helper for the time frame. Put not after that helper to negate, or move it before the subject to ask.

ONE LAST CHALLENGE

Can you interview a witness?

The bell rang yesterday. Ask whether Tara heard it, then write her short positive answer in the first person.



A POSSIBLE ANSWER

Did you hear the bell yesterday? Yes, I heard it.

Did takes the base form hear. The answer uses the irregular past heard.

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