

# Simple Past Tense

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Target students: Lower intermediate (Senior primary)

Corpus used: COCA (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>)

Lesson duration: 120 mins

Topic: Diaries

## Lesson objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Identify the past-tense form;
2. Demonstrate awareness of the spelling rules of past tense verbs;
3. Use COCA to search for the past-tense forms and collaborate with teammates to solve language problems;
4. Use past tense verbs to write a diary.

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## Acknowledgements:

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### Step 1: Video watching

1. Ask students to watch a video on what the class did yesterday and then answer the following questions.

*What did you do? We went to the park. - Easy Dialogue*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqMpREQdnCY> (-01:13)

- (a) What did the dog do yesterday?
  - (b) What did Sally do yesterday?
  - (c) What did Mike do yesterday?
  - (d) What did the teacher do yesterday?
2. Ask students to circle the past tense verbs in the dialogue.

Good morning, Sally. How are you?  
I'm great. What did you do yesterday?  
We went to the park.  
What did you do in the park?  
We flew kites. His kites flew high.  
Wow! You're good.  
What did you do yesterday, Sally?  
I read books.  
Let's go to the classroom.

What did you do yesterday?  
I watched a science movie.  
What did you do yesterday, Mike?  
I made bulgogi with my dad.  
How was it?  
It was very delicious. We had a bulgogi party.  
I made cookies yesterday. I brought cookies for you.  
Thanks! Mm, delicious!

## Step 2: Introduction of the structure of a diary entry

1. Ask students to read the following diary. In groups, they have to find out the features of a diary (e.g. the format, date, weather, past tense forms, etc.)
2. Ask students to circle the past tense verbs in the diary and explain why the past tense is used.

3 August 2019 (Saturday) Sunny

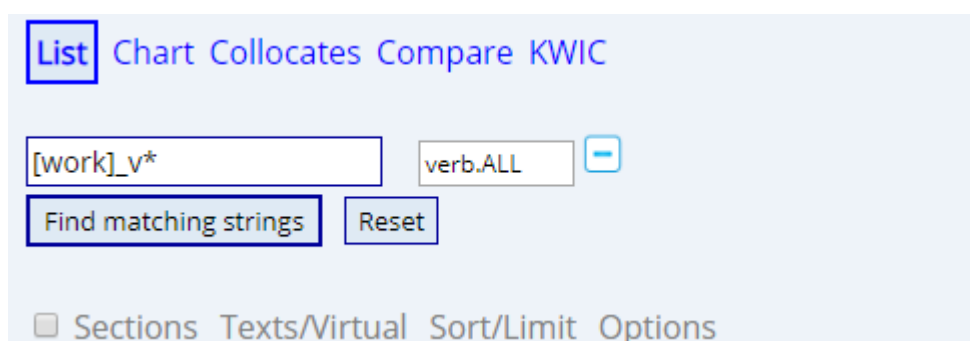
It was Uncle Fred's wedding today. Our family went to his wedding party. All of us felt great. I found a missing ring on the floor of the church. It belonged to a woman in a floral dress. I picked up the ring and returned it to her. She was very happy to get her ring back. She thanked me and said I was a very honest

## Step 3: Discovery of the verb form of past simple.

1. Ask students to predict the past-tense form of the given verbs;
2. Show students how to search for different verb forms on COCA;

Instructions:

- Website of COCA: <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>
- Type in the target word under 'List' – [work], and choose 'verb.ALL' in the part of speech



The screenshot shows the COCA search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: 'List' (highlighted with a blue box), 'Chart', 'Collocates', 'Compare', and 'KWIC'. Below these, there is a search input field containing '[work]\_v\*' and a dropdown menu set to 'verb.ALL'. There are two buttons: 'Find matching strings' (highlighted with a blue box) and 'Reset'. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for 'Sections Texts/Virtual Sort/Limit Options'.

- All the verb forms of 'work' are shown. Ask students to tell which is the past tense form.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	CONTEXT	ALL FORMS (SAMPLE): 100 200 500
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	WORK	
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	WORKING	
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	WORKED	
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	WORKS	

Note: 'worked' is both the past tense form and the past participle of 'work'.

3. In groups, students do hands-on search on COCA and fill in the table. Group 1 works on Table 1, Group 2 on Table 2, and Group 3 on Table 3.

Table 1		
Verb	Past-tense form	Sentences
work		In order to answer this question, I _____ with a team of research assistants last month.
live		In 1880, 72% of the American population _____ rurally and 28% _____ in cities.
cry		He _____ out like a wounded bird.
stop		The rain _____ and the sun played gloriously through the windows of our suite.
wake		When he _____, it was still dark.

Table 2		
Verb	Past-tense form	Sentences
act		He _____ in self-defense after Martin attacked him.
move		He _____ to Australia in 1945 as a sailor.
study		He _____ history and English at Fudan University.
jog		I _____ back toward the house and my warm bed.
go		Four officers _____ to the apartment.

Table 3		
Verb	Past-tense form	Sentences
call		When he _____ the Pennsylvania state police to clarify the situation, he was arrested and jailed.
hope		She _____ to do well because the talk was very important to her.
carry		The elevator _____ visitors from the ground to a lofty observation level.
clip		I just _____ on this tie.
begin		I _____ my legal career in the early 1980s.

- Regroup the students – each group will have a representative from each table. They share their findings about the past-tense forms and complete the following tables together.
- Invite some groups to share their conclusion.

Infinitive	Past tense	Rules
work		
act		
call		

Infinitive	Past tense	Rules
live		
move		
hope		

Infinitive	Past tense	Rules
cry		
study		
carry		

Infinitive	Past tense	Rules
stop		
jog		
clip		

Infinitive	Past tense	Rules
wake		
go		
begin		

6. In groups, find out **the negative form of the past tense** using COCA.

- (a) Type in [do].
- (b) Choose 'verb.ED' (past tense) for the part of speech.
- (c) Type in 'not'.

The screenshot shows a search interface with a search box containing the text "[do]\_v?d\* not". To the right of the search box is a dropdown menu currently showing "verb.ED". Below the search box are two buttons: "Find matching strings" and "Reset". Above the search box are links for "List", "Chart", "Collocates", "Compare", and "KWIC".

**Rule: The past tense in the negative is: did not + infinitive**

**Step 4: Discover the Past Simple of 'be'.**

1. Ask students whether the Past Simple of 'be' follows the rules above.
2. Show students a video and ask them to complete the following table.

*Past Simple Tense be - was / were:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3FdGPehN-E> (--02:50)

Positive sentences	Negative sentences
He _____ short.	He _____ tall.
I _____ a police officer.	I _____ a fire fighter.
She _____ beautiful.	She _____ ugly.
It _____ expensive.	It _____ cheap.
We _____ at home.	We _____ at school.
They _____ in Russia.	They _____ in Thailand.


### Step 5: Write a diary together!

In pairs, students write a diary about the teacher's birthday party yesterday.

2 August 2019 (Sat)

Cloudy

Diary	Verb-past tense	Pictures
Yesterday _____ (is) Miss Chan's birthday.	be – <b>was</b>	
We _____ (do) any classwork. We _____ (have) a birthday party together.	do (not) – <b>did</b>  not do  have – <b>had</b>	
We _____ (watch) cartoon movies and _____ (play) funny games.	watch – <b>watched</b>  play – <b>played</b>	
We _____ (eat) a big birthday cake and _____ (drink) some orange juice.	eat – <b>ate</b>  drink – <b>drank</b>	
We also _____ (sing) and _____ (dance) together.	sing – <b>sang</b>  dance – <b>danced</b>	

<p>We _____ (be) all very happy!</p> <p>We _____ (make) such a loud noise that the teacher next to our classroom _____ (be) happy.</p>	<p>be – <b>were</b></p> <p>make – <b>made</b></p> <p>be (not) – <b>was not</b></p>	
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**Step 6: Do a mini-interview**

1. Ask students to write down two sentences to describe what they did yesterday on a worksheet.
2. Ask students to interview two classmates and write down what their classmates did on the worksheet.
3. After the interview, invite some students to report what they and their classmates did yesterday.

**Example :**

What I did yesterday...	I did my homework in the afternoon. Then I read the story book 'Little Red Riding Hood' yesterday.
Mini-interview	
Name of classmate: Mike	Mike washed dishes yesterday. He went to a park after school.
Name of classmate: Sarah	Sarah played the piano and practised singing yesterday.

What I did yesterday...	
Mini-interview	



Name of classmate:	
Name of classmate:	

**Step 7: Write a diary entry for Mr Bean**

1. Watch a video clip about Mr Bean and his guest.

*Mr Bean's Guest – Past Simple with Mr Bean*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nbt9Rp5pY> (1:30)

2. Imagine you are Mr Bean. Write a diary to describe what happened to you, your guest Jimmy and your teddy bear.



Mr Bean's Diary

\_\_\_\_\_

I couldn't sleep because of Jimmy's loud snoring. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Supplementary Language Practice (optional)

### Gap-filling exercise

1. Introduce the video 'Kung Fu Panda' to students – *Where did I come from? An adopted panda.* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4B43IIq-Sg> (1:40-3:23)
2. Show the video.
3. Ask students to finish the gap-filling task individually.
4. Share their answers with partners.
5. Watch the video again and check answers.

It \_\_\_\_ (be) just another day at the restaurant, time to make the noodles. I \_\_\_\_ (go) out to the back, where my vegetables had just been delivered. There \_\_\_\_ (be) cabbages, turnips, radishes. Only there \_\_\_\_\_ (be) no radishes, just a very hungry baby panda. There \_\_\_\_ (be) no note. Of course, you could have eaten it. I \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for someone to come looking for you, but no one \_\_\_\_\_ (do). I \_\_\_\_ (bring) you inside. I \_\_\_\_\_ (feed) you. I \_\_\_\_ (give) you a bath. And I \_\_\_\_ (feed) you again, and again. And I \_\_\_\_ (try) to put some pants on you. And then I \_\_\_\_\_ (make) a decision that would change my life forever – to make my soup without radishes, and to raise you as my own son, Xiao Po, my little panda.

