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**Form**

The simple past tense in regular verbs is formed by adding **ed** to the infinitive:

Infinitive: *to work*

Simple past: *worked*

Verbs ending in **e** add **d** only:

Infinitive: *to love*

Simple past: *loved*

The same form is used for all persons:

I worked you worked he worked etc.

The negative of regular and irregular verbs is formed with **did not** (**didn't**) and the infinitive:

I did not/didn't work

you did not/didn't work etc.

The interrogative of regular and irregular verbs is formed with did + subject + infinitive:

did I work? did you work? etc.

*Negative interrogative:* did you not/didn't you work? *etc.*

**Spelling notes**

The rules about doubling the final consonant when adding **ing** apply also when adding **ed**:

*admit, admitted stop, stopped travel, travelled*

Verbs ending in **y** following a consonant change the **y** into **i** before adding **ed**:

*carry, carried try, tried*

but **y** following a vowel does not change: *obey, obeyed*.

**Irregular verbs: form**

These vary considerably in their simple past form:

Infinitive: *to eat, to leave, to see, to speak*

Simple past: *ate, left, saw, spoke*

The simple past form of each irregular verb must therefore be learnt, but once this is done there is no other difficulty, as irregular verbs (like regular verbs) have no inflexions in the past tense.

**Use for the relation of past events**

A It is used for actions completed in the past at a definite time. It is therefore used:

1 for a past action when the time is given:

*I met him yesterday. Pasteur died in 1895.*

2 or when the time is asked about:

When did you meet him?

3 or when the action clearly took place at a definite time even though this time is not mentioned:

*The train was ten minutes late. How did you get your present job? I bought this car in Montreal.*

4 Sometimes the time becomes definite as a result of a question and answer in the present perfect:

*Where have you been? ~ I've been to the opera. ~ Did you enjoy it?*

B The simple past tense is used for an action whose time is not given but which

1. occupied a period of time now terminated

Examples:

He worked in that bank for four years. (but he does not work there now)

She lived in Rome for a long time. (but she is not living there now)

1. occurred at a moment in a period of time now terminated.

Examples:

My grandmother once saw Queen Victoria.

Did you ever hear Maria Callas sing?

These will be clearer when compared with the present perfect

C The simple past tense is also used for a past habit:

*He always carried an umbrella.*

*They never drank wine.* (For **used to** indicating past habits)

D The simple past is used in conditional sentences, type 2