

Lesson #10

# *Regular verbs: Simple past tense*

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## Regular verbs: simple past tense

*The goals of this week's Classroom lesson (#10) are to learn more about the simple past tense of regular verbs. In this lesson, you will learn how to recognize and use the simple past tense of regular verbs in order to further extend your knowledge of verb conjugation in English. You will be able to master this skill through the following text, grammatical explanations, and exercises within VOA's The Classroom.*

### WARM-UP:

#### PAST

- Yesterday
- Then
- In 1968,
- 1991, etc.



#### PRESENT

- Today
- Now
- In 2011



#### FUTURE

- Tomorrow
- Then
- In 2012, etc



#### Talking about the past:

When were you born? I was born in \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Where were you born? I was born in \_\_\_\_\_ (city, country)

What are the historical events that marked you? Why?

#### Memorable quotes about time:

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.” ~ Albert Einstein

“Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forward.” ~ Soren Kierkegaard

What do these quotes mean to you?



# Regular verbs: simple past tense

## TEXTS

Below is an edited version of a VOA News article. Read it and underline all the regular simple past tenses you can find.

### American History: Nation Grows More Conservative in '20s

Americans **experimented** with many new customs and social traditions during the 1920s. There were new dances, new kinds of clothes and some of the most imaginative art and writing ever produced in the United States. Many people **labeled** the period "The Roaring Twenties", to show the exuberance and vitality of the artistic and social scenes.

But in most ways, the 1920s were a conservative time in American life. Voters **elected** three conservative Republican presidents: Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover. And they **supported** many conservative social and political policies.

Most Americans in the 1920s **shared** some ties through blood or marriage to the first Americans who came from Britain. Many people with these kinds of historic ties **considered** themselves to be real Americans, true Americans. Americans traditionally **welcomed** newcomers from such western European countries as Britain, France, or Germany. But most of the people coming to New York City and other harbors in the 1920s **arrived** from the central, eastern and southern areas of Europe. Some Americans soon **worried** about these millions of people arriving at their shores. They **worried** that the immigrant newcomers might steal their jobs. Or they **feared** the political beliefs of the immigrants. Pressure to control immigration **increased** following World War I. Congress **passed** a bill that set a limit on how many people would be allowed to enter from each foreign country.



A second sign of the conservative feelings in the 1920s was the nation's effort to ban the sale of alcoholic drinks, or liquor. This policy was known as Prohibition, because it **prohibited** -- or **banned** -- alcoholic drinks. Many of the strongest supporters of Prohibition were conservative Americans living in rural areas. Many of them **believed** that liquor was evil, the product of the devil. However, Prohibition laws **failed** terribly from the start. There was only a small force of police to enforce the new laws. And millions of Americans still **wanted** to drink liquor. It was not possible for the police to watch every American who **wanted** to buy a drink secretly or make liquor in his own home. Some people **imported** liquor across the long, unprotected border with Canada or on fast boats from the Caribbean islands. By the middle of the 1920s, most Americans **realized** that Prohibition laws were a failure. But the laws did not change until the election of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1932.

A third sign of conservatism in the 1920s was the effort by some Americans to ban schoolbooks on



modern science. Most of the Americans who **supported** these efforts were conservative rural Americans who **believed** in the traditional ideas of the Protestant Christian church. Many of them **feared** the many changes that had taken place in American society. Science **seemed** to challenge the most basic ideas taught in the Bible. The conflict **opened** a major public debate in 1925 in a trial over Charles Darwin's idea of evolution. Darwin **supported** the idea that humans developed over millions of years from apes and other animals.

American society **changed** in many important ways during the early part of the twentieth century. It was not yet the world superpower that it would become after World War Two. But neither was it a traditional rural society of conservative farmers and clergy. The 1920s were a period of growth, of change and of struggle between the old and new values.

See the full article at:

<http://www.voanews.com/learningenglish/home/us-history/American-History-Turning-to-the-Right-as-Conservatism-Grows-in-the-1920s-113369989.html>

NEW VOCABULARY		
<p><b>Verbs</b></p> <p><b>To ban:</b> to prohibit, to veto  <b>To enforce:</b> to impose  <b>To experiment:</b> to test  <b>To fail:</b> to be unsuccessful  <b>To label:</b> to name  <b>To pass:</b> (here) to vote  <b>To worry:</b> to be anxious</p>	<p><b>Nouns</b></p> <p><b>Clergy:</b> church  <b>Custom:</b> a social convention  <b>Exuberance:</b> energy  <b>Harbor:</b> a port  <b>Kind:</b> a type, a sort  <b>Newcomer:</b> settler  <b>Policy:</b> rule, law  <b>Shore:</b> coast  <b>Struggle:</b> fight  <b>Tie:</b> (here) a connection  <b>Trial:</b> deliberation in a judicial court</p>	<p><b>Adjectives</b></p> <p><b>Evil:</b> sinful, malicious  <b>Roaring:</b> noisy  <b>Rural:</b> countryside</p>
<p><b>Adverbs</b></p> <p><b>Soon:</b> quickly</p>		

## Work on the Text

1) List all the regular verbs that are conjugated in the simple past tense.

*All the regular verbs conjugated in the simple past tense are highlighted in this color.*

2) Can you spot a few other verbs conjugated in the past, which are not regular?

*“were” (l.2 -> “to be”), “was” (l.27 -> “to be”)*

3) What are the three signs of conservatism during the 1920s?

*Resentment over immigration, the Prohibition and the challenge of Protestant beliefs*



## Work on the Text (cont.)

### 4) Which elements of US culture and history epitomize the 1920s for you?

[Open-ended] *Jazz-age, Harlem Renaissance, Lost Generation, Wall Street financial crash, building of skyscrapers (notably the Empire State building), the Flapper culture, Harry Houdini, Prohibition, etc.*

## LESSON

Regular verbs: simple past tense

The simple past tense is used to describe actions that are completed in the past. It is formed by adding –ed or –d to the infinitive of a verb, except for irregular verbs. Most verbs in English are regular but some of the most used ones, such as “to be”, “to have”, “to go” and “to do” (to name a few) are irregular.

How to form the simple past tense for regular verbs:

When the verb ends with the combination ‘consonant + e’ or –ee, add –d to the verb:

**Examples:** He tapes all the games / he taped all the games  
They plant a tree / they planted a tree.  
She kisses him / she kissed him.  
Our ears buzz / our ears buzzed.

When the verb ends with two different consonants or with two similar consonants, add –ed to the verb. If it ends in ‘consonant + y’, replace the ‘y’ by ‘i’ and add –ed:

**Examples:** I work / I worked.  
They plant a tree / they planted a tree.  
She kisses him / she kissed him.  
You study a lot / you studied a lot.

Monosyllabic verbs ending with one consonant (except for –x) you generally double the consonant and add –ed\*:

**Examples:** He stirs his coffee / He stirred his coffee.  
The mechanic fixes the car / the mechanic fixed the car.



## LESSON (cont.)

\* In the US, all other verbs ending in a single consonant do not double the consonant. In British English, they do. Both are correct however.

**Examples:** I travel / I traveled. (US English)  
The prof cancels class / the prof canceled class. (US English)

I travel / I travelled. (British English)  
The prof cancels class / the prof cancelled class. (British English)

The text focuses on war / the text focused on war. (US English)  
The text focusses on war / the text focussed on war.  
(British English)

### How to use the simple past tense:

1) A completed action (or a series of actions) in the past:

The simple past tense is used to describe an action (or a series of actions) that started and finished in the past.

**Examples:** They watched a movie last weekend.  
We stayed in and ordered pizza last night.

### 2) Duration in the past:

The simple past tense is used to express a duration that started and stopped in the past.

**Examples:** She lived in England for three years.  
They talked on the phone for five minutes.

### 3) Habit or recurrent action in the past:

The simple past tense is used to express a habit or recurrent action in the past.

**Examples:** He traveled abroad every summer when he was young.  
You played the piano as a child.



## LESSON (cont.)

How to use the simple past tense and questions:

The auxiliary verb “do” in its past form (“did”) is essential to phrasing questions in the simple past tense:

**Example:**        **Did** you watch the State of Address?  
                          What did you eat yesterday?

How to use the simple past tense and the negation:

The auxiliary verb “do” in its past form (“**did**”) is essential to using the negation in the simple past tense. There are two forms: “**did not**” and “**didn’t**”. The first one is used in formal written and oral English while the second one is used in informal written and oral English:

Example:        I **did not** / **didn’t** watch the State of Address.

## Exercises

### 1. Circle the correct simple past tense conjugation of the verb:

- a) He seemed anxious.
- b) We agreed on the deadline for submission.
- c) They patted him on the shoulder.
- d) The Romans conquered most of the Mediterranean basin.
- e) She listened to the weather forecast.



## Exercises (cont.)

### 2. Fill in the blanks and conjugate the verbs in the simple past tense:

Last night, my friends and I decided to go out. It was nice out, so we walked downtown and looked for a nice place to have drinks. We all settled on a warm-looking and cozy pub, which advertized a funk band playing that night. We entered and as we glanced around, it appeared that it was not too crowded. We stayed anyway, and the concert was fantastic! We danced for hours and had a lot of fun!

### 3. Find the missing questions and answers:

Did you wake up late this morning? No, I didn't / did not wake up late this morning.

Did you talk to your parents on the phone? Yes, I talked to my parents on the phone.

Did they arrive on time? Yes, they arrived on time.

What did you study at school? At school, I studied chemistry and biology.

Did you know she sings very well? No, I didn't / did not know that she sings very well.

### 4. Recount a memory using regular verbs in the simple past tense as much as possible.

Example:

*In 2000, I remember I **traveled** to the USA for the first time. I **decided** to stay on the West coast, and I **loved** it! People were very friendly and **welcomed** me with open arms [...]*

## Wind-down

Below is a link from VOA Student Union Blog with a funny and personal outlook on school life in the US. The original text is called "How to Enjoy the Headmaster's Holiday."

<http://blogs.voanews.com/student-union/2010/10/22/how-to-enjoy-the-headmasters-holiday/#more-913>

### Can you find examples of regular verbs that are conjugated in the simple past tense?

"yelled", "listened", "cheered", "realized", "asked", "struggled", "knocked", "asked", "snoozed", "looked", "started", "started", "learned", "seemed", "grabbed", "looked", "complimented" (mistake in the original text -> 'complement')\*, "disappeared", "tried", "managed", "realized", "ended", "finished"



## Wind-down (cont.)

### What are the infinitives of these verbs?

*“to yell”, “to listen”, “to cheer”, “to realize”, “to ask”, “to struggle”, “to knock”, “to snooze”, “to look”, “to start”, “to learn”, “to seem”, “to grab”, “to compliment”, “to disappear”, “to try”, “to manage”, “to end”, “to finish”*

- \* to compliment: to say something nice or appreciative to someone.
- to complement: to add so as to make a whole.

Look at this excerpt from Dire Strait’s “Brothers in Arms”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XVVZPefbR4>

(Second stanza)

Through these fields of destruction  
Baptisms of fire  
I witnessed your suffering  
As the battle raged higher  
And though they did hurt me so bad  
In the fear and alarm  
You did not desert me  
My brothers in arms

### Can you find examples of regular verbs that are conjugated in the simple past tense?

*All the regular verbs conjugated in the simple past tense are highlighted in this color.*

### What are the infinitives of these verbs?

*“to witness” and “to rage”*

Pictures warm-up: Stockvault.net

Text: VOA News Learning English

Picture text: VOA News Learning English

Wind-down text: VOA Student Union Blog

Wind-down video: Youtube.com

