Basic
SPOKEN ENGLISH WITH

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Simple Past Tense

The simple past is a verb tense that is used to talk about things that happened or existed before now. Imagine someone asks what your brother Hassan did while he was in town last weekend.

- Hassan **entered** a hula hoop contest.
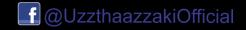- He **won** the silver medal.

Simple Past Tense

You can also use the simple past to talk about a past state of being, such as the way someone felt about something. This is often expressed with the simple past tense of the verb **to be** and an adjective, noun, or prepositional phrase.

- Hassan **was proud** of his hula hoop victory.

- The contest **was** the highlight of this week.

How to Formulate the Simple Past

- For regular verbs, add **-ed** to the root form of the verb (or just -d if the root form already ends in an **e**):

    Play→Played   Listen→Listened   Use→Used

- For irregular verbs, things get more complicated. The simple past tense of some irregular verbs looks exactly like the root form:

    Put→Put   Cut→Cut

    Hit→Hit   Cost→Cost

                Set→Set

How to Formulate the Simple Past

- For other irregular verbs, including the verb **to be**, the simple past forms are more erratic:

  See→Saw, Build→Built, Go→Went, Do→Did,
  Rise→Rose, Am/Is/Are→Was/Were

- The good news is that verbs in the simple past tense (except for the verb **to be**) don't need to agree in number with their subjects.

  Hassan **polished** his medal. The other winners **polished** their medals too.

How to Make the Simple Past Negative

There is a formula for making simple past verbs negative, and it's the same for both regular and irregular verbs (except for the verb **to be**). The formula is **did not + [root form of verb]**. You can also use the contraction **didn't** instead of **did not**.

Hassan **did not brag** too much about his hula hoop skills. Hassan's girlfriend **didn't see** the contest.

How to Make the Simple Past Negative

For the verb **to be**, you don't need the auxiliary *did*. When the subject of the sentence is singular, use **was not** or **wasn't**. When the subject is plural, use **were not** or **weren't**.

The third-place winner **was not** as happy as Hassan. The fourth-place winner **wasn't** happy at all. The onlookers **were not** ready to leave after the contest ended. The contestants **weren't** ready to leave either.

How to Ask a Question

The formula for asking a question in the simple past tense is **did + [subject] + [root form of verb]**.

- **Did** Hassan **win** the gold medal or the silver medal? Where **did** Hassan **go** to celebrate? **Did the judges decide** fairly, in your opinion?

When asking a question with the verb to be, you don't need the auxiliary *did*. The formula is **was/were + [subject]**.

- **Was** Hassan in a good mood after the contest? **Were** people taking lots of pictures?

Common Regular Verbs
in the Past Tense

Infinitive	Past Tense	Negative
to ask	asked	did not ask
to work	worked	did not work
to call	called	did not call
to use	used	did not use

Common Irregular Verbs in the Past Tense

Infinitive	Past Tense	Negative
to be	was were	was not were not
to have	had	did not have
to do	did	did not do
to say	said	did not say
to get	got	did not get
to make	made	did not make
to go	went	did not go
to take	took	did not take
to see	saw	did not see
to come	came	did not come