

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.

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.

Congressman T.S. McMillan of Charleston, South Carolina with two women who are doing the Charleston dance near the Capitol building in Washington D.C.

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.

The nineteen twenties were a time of economic progress for most Americans. During the administrations of President Warren Harding and President Calvin Coolidge, many companies grew larger, creating new jobs. Wages for most Americans increased. Many people began to have enough money to buy new kinds of products. The strong economy also created the right environment for many important changes in the day-to-day social life of Americans. The nineteen twenties are remembered now as “an exciting time that historians call the “Roaring Twenties.”

This week in our series, Kay Gallant and Harry Monroe tell more about that period.

(MUSIC)



**KAY GALLANT:** The nineteen twenties brought a feeling of freedom and independence to millions of Americans, especially young Americans. Young soldiers returned from the world war with new ideas. They had seen a different world in Europe. They had faced death and learned to enjoy the pleasures that each day offered.

Many of these young soldiers were not willing to quietly accept the old traditions of their families and villages when they returned home. Instead, they wanted to try new ways of living.

**HARRY MONROE:** Many young Americans, both men and women, began to challenge some of the traditions of their parents and grandparents. For example, some young women began to experiment with new kinds of clothes. They no longer wore dresses that hid the shape of their bodies. Instead, they wore thinner dresses that uncovered part of their legs.

Many young women began to smoke cigarettes, too. Cigarette production in the United States more than doubled in the ten years between nineteen eighteen and nineteen twenty-eight.

Many women also began to drink alcohol with men in public for the first time. And they listened together to a popular new kind of music: jazz.

Young people danced the Fox Trot, the Charleston, and other new dances. They held one another tightly on the dance floor, instead of dancing far apart.

(MUSIC)

**KAY GALLANT:** It was a revolution in social values, at least among some Americans. People openly discussed subjects that their parents and grandparents had kept private.

There were popular books and shows about unmarried mothers and about homosexuality. The growing film industry made films about all-night parties between unmarried men and women. And people discussed the new ideas about sex formed by Sigmund Freud and other new thinkers.

An important force behind these changes was the growing independence of American women. In nineteen twenty, the nation passed the Nineteenth Amendment to the constitution, which gave women the right to vote. Of equal importance, many women took jobs during the war and continued working after the troops returned home. Also, new machines freed many of them from spending long hours of work in the home washing clothes, preparing food, and doing other jobs.

**HARRY MONROE:** Education was another important force behind the social changes of the nineteen-twenties. More and more Americans were getting a good education. The number of students attending high school doubled between nineteen twenty and nineteen thirty. Many of the schools now offered new kinds of classes to prepare students for useful jobs.

Attendance at colleges and universities also increased greatly. And colleges offered more classes in such useful subjects as teacher training, engineering, and business administration.

Two inventions also helped cause the social changes. They were the automobile and the radio. The automobile gave millions of Americans the freedom to travel easily to new places. And the radio brought new ideas and experiences into their own homes.

Probably the most important force behind social change was the continuing economic growth of the nineteen twenties. Many people had extra money to spend on things other than food, housing, and other basic needs.

They could experiment with new products and different ways of living.

(MUSIC)

**KAY GALLANT:** Of course, not all Americans were wearing strange new “flapper” clothes or dancing until early in the morning. Millions of Americans in small towns or rural areas continued to live simple, quiet lives.



Life was still hard for many people including blacks, foreigners, and other minority groups. The many newspaper stories about independent women reporters and doctors also did not represent the real life of the average American woman. Women could vote. But three of every four women still worked at home. Most of the women working outside their homes were from minority groups or foreign countries.

The films and radio stories about exciting parties and social events were just a dream for millions of Americans. But the dreams were strong. And many Americans -- rich and poor -- followed with great interest each new game, dance, and custom.

**HARRY MONROE:** The wide interest in this kind of popular culture was unusually strong during the nineteen twenties. People became extremely interested in exciting court trials, disasters, film actors, and other subjects. For example, millions of Americans followed the sad story of Floyd Collins, a young man who became trapped while exploring underground. Newsmen reported to the nation as rescue teams searched to find him. Even the "New York Times" newspaper printed a large story on its front page when rescuers finally discovered the man's dead body.

Another event that caught public attention was a murder trial in the eastern state of New Jersey in nineteen twenty-six.

Newsmen wrote five million words about this case of a minister found dead with a woman member of his church. Again, the case itself was of little importance from a world news point of view. But it was exciting. And Americans were tired of reading about serious political issues after the bloody world war.

See the full article at:

<http://www.voanews.com/learningenglish/home/usa/American-History--Roaring-Twenties-a-Time-of-Economic-and-Social-Change-112612204.html>

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



## Work on the Text

- 1) List all the regular verbs that are conjugated in the simple past tense.
- 2) Can you spot a few other verbs conjugated in the past, which are not regular?
- 3) What are the three signs of conservatism during the 1920s?
- 4) Which elements of US culture and history epitomize the 1920s for you?

### 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 tapedd all the games  
They plant a tree / they plantedd a tree.  
She kisses him / she kissedd him.  
Our ears buzz / our ears buzzedd.

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 workeded.  
They plant a tree / they planteded a tree.  
She kisses him / she kisseded him.  
You study a lot / you studieded 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:

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

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

Last night, my friends and I \_\_\_\_\_ (decide) to go out. It was nice out, so we \_\_\_\_\_ (walk) downtown and \_\_\_\_\_ (look) for a nice place to have drinks. We all \_\_\_\_\_ (settle) on a warm-looking and cozy pub, which \_\_\_\_\_ (advertize) a funk band playing that night. We \_\_\_\_\_ (enter) and as we \_\_\_\_\_ (glance) around, it \_\_\_\_\_ (appear) that it was not too crowded. We \_\_\_\_\_ (stay) anyway, and the concert was fantastic! We \_\_\_\_\_ (dance) for hours and had a lot of fun!



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

Did you wake up late this morning? No, \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_ ? Yes, I talked to my parents on the phone.

Did they arrive on time? Yes, \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_ ? At school, I studied chemistry and biology.

Did you know she sings very well? No, \_\_\_\_\_.

**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 Special English about the history of 'OK'. The original text is called "Seriously: 'OK' Began as a Joke in a Newspaper in Boston in 1839."

<http://www.voanews.com/learningenglish/home/usa/Seriously-OK-Began-as-a-Joke-in-a-Newspaper-in-111558639.html>

Look at this excerpt from the Beatles "A day in the life":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCUeia-nEio>

(Fourth and fifth stanzas)

\_\_\_\_\_ up, \_\_\_\_\_ out of bed  
Dragged a comb across my head  
\_\_\_\_\_ my way downstairs and \_\_\_\_\_ a cup  
And looking up, I noticed I was late

\_\_\_\_\_ my coat and grabbed my hat  
\_\_\_\_\_ the bus in seconds flat  
\_\_\_\_\_ my way upstairs and \_\_\_\_\_ a smoke  
And somebody \_\_\_\_\_ and I \_\_\_\_\_ into a dream

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



Pictures warm-up: Stockvault.net  
Text: VOA News Learning English  
Picture text: VOA News Learning English  
Wind-down text: VOA Student Union Blog  
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