

# Past simple (I did)

**A** Study this example:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an Austrian musician and composer. He lived from 1756 to 1791. He started composing at the age of five and wrote more than 600 pieces of music. He was only 35 years old when he died.



Lived/started/wrote/was/died are all *past simple*.

**B** Very often the past simple ends in *-ed* (*regular verbs*):

- I work in a travel agency now. Before that I **worked** in a shop.
- We **invited** them to our party but they **decided** not to come.
- The police **stopped** me on my way home last night.
- She **passed** her examination because she **studied** very hard.

For spelling (stopped, studied etc.), see Appendix 6.

But many verbs are *irregular*. The past simple does *not* end in *-ed*. For example:

- |       |   |       |   |
|-------|---|-------|---|
| write | → | wrote | ● Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music. |
| see   | → | saw   | ● We saw Rose in town a few days ago.         |
| go    | → | went  | ● I went to the cinema three times last week. |
| shut  | → | shut  | ● It was cold, so I shut the window.          |

For a list of irregular verbs, see Appendix 1.

**C** In questions and negatives we use *did/didn't + infinitive* (enjoy/see/go etc.):

I she they	enjoyed saw went	<b>did</b>	you she they	enjoy? see? go?	<b>didn't</b>	I she they	enjoy see go
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- A: Did you go out last night?
- B: Yes, I went to the cinema but I **didn't** enjoy the film much.
- 'When **did** Mr Thomas die?' 'About ten years ago.'
- They **didn't** invite her to the party, so she **didn't** go.
- 'Did you have time to write the letter?' 'No, I **didn't**.'

Be careful when *do* is the main verb in the sentence:

- What did you **do** at the weekend? (*not* 'what did you at the weekend')
- I **didn't do** anything. (*not* 'I didn't anything')

**D** The past of *be* (am/is/are) is *was/were*:

I/he/she/it	was/wasn't	was	I/he/she/it?
we/you/they	were/weren't	were	we/you/they?

Note that we do *not* use *did* in negatives and questions with *was/were*:

- I was angry because they were late.
- Was the weather good when you were on holiday?
- They weren't able to come because they were so busy.
- Did you go out last night or were you too tired?

1 Read what Sharon says about a typical working day:



SHARON

I usually get up at 7 o'clock and have a big breakfast. I walk to work, which takes me about half an hour. I start work at 8.45. I never have lunch. I finish work at 5 o'clock. I'm always tired when I get home. I usually cook a meal in the evening. I don't usually go out. I go to bed at about 11 o'clock. I always sleep well.

Yesterday was a typical working day for Sharon. Write what she did or didn't do yesterday.

- |                                |          |                           |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| 1 ... She got up at 7 o'clock. | 7 .....  | at 5 o'clock.             |
| 2 She ..... a big breakfast.   | 8 .....  | tired when ..... home.    |
| 3 She .....                    | 9 .....  | a meal yesterday evening. |
| 4 It ..... to get to work.     | 10 ..... | out yesterday evening.    |
| 5 ..... at 8.45.               | 11 ..... | at 11 o'clock.            |
| 6 ..... lunch.                 | 12 ..... | well last night.          |

2 Put one of these verbs in each sentence:

buy catch cost drink fall hurt sell spend teach throw win write

- Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music.
- 'How did you learn to drive?' 'My father ..... me.'
- We couldn't afford to keep our car, so we ..... it.
- I was very thirsty. I ..... the water very quickly.
- Paul and I played tennis yesterday. He's much better than me, so he ..... easily.
- Don ..... down the stairs this morning and ..... his leg.
- Jim ..... the ball to Sue, who ..... it.
- Ann ..... a lot of money yesterday. She ..... a dress which ..... £100.

3 A friend has just come back from holiday. You ask him about it. Write your questions.

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 (where/go?) <u>Where did you go?</u> | 6 (how/travel?) .....                |
| 2 (go alone?) .....                    | 7 (the weather / fine?) .....        |
| 3 (food/good?) .....                   | 8 (what / do in the evenings?) ..... |
| 4 (how long / stay there?) .....       | 9 (meet anybody interesting?) .....  |
| 5 (stay / at a hotel?) .....           |                                      |

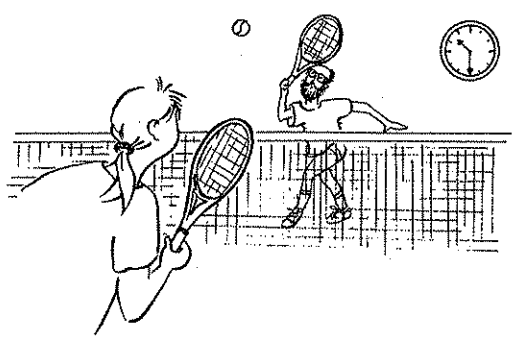
4 Complete the sentences. Put the verb into the correct form, positive or negative.

- It was warm, so I took off my coat. (take)
- The film wasn't very good. I didn't enjoy it very much. (enjoy)
- I knew Sarah was very busy, so I ..... her. (disturb)
- I was very tired, so I ..... to bed early. (go)
- The bed was very uncomfortable. I ..... very well. (sleep)
- Sue wasn't hungry, so she ..... anything. (eat)
- We went to Kate's house but she ..... at home. (be)
- It was a funny situation but nobody ..... (laugh)
- The window was open and a bird ..... into the room. (fly)
- The hotel wasn't very expensive. It ..... very much. (cost)
- I was in a hurry, so I ..... time to phone you. (have)
- It was hard work carrying the bags. They ..... very heavy. (be)

# Past continuous (I was doing)

A

Study this example situation:

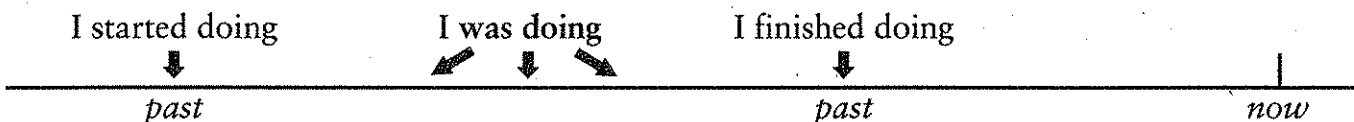


Yesterday Karen and Jim played tennis. They began at 10 o'clock and finished at 11.30.  
So, at 10.30 they were **playing** tennis.  
They were **playing** = 'they were in the middle of playing'. They had not finished playing.  
**Was/were -ing** is the *past continuous*:

I/he/she/it	was	playing
we/you/they	were	doing
		working etc.

B

We use the past continuous to say that somebody was in the middle of doing something at a certain time. The action or situation had already started before this time but had not finished:



- This time last year I **was living** in Brazil.
- What **were you doing** at 10 o'clock last night?
- I waved to her but she **wasn't looking**.

C

Compare the past continuous (I was doing) and past simple (I did):

<p><i>Past continuous</i> (in the middle of an action)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I <b>was walking</b> home when I met Dave. (= in the middle of walking home)</li> <li>● Ann <b>was watching</b> television when the phone rang.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Past simple</i> (complete action)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I <b>walked</b> home after the party last night. (= all the way, completely)</li> <li>● Ann <b>watched</b> television a lot when she was ill last year.</li> </ul>
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D

We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to say that something **happened** in the middle of something else:

- Tom **burnt** his hand when he **was cooking** the dinner.
- I **saw** you in the park yesterday. You **were sitting** on the grass and **reading** a book.
- While I **was working** in the garden, I **hurt** my back.

But we use the past *simple* to say that one thing happened *after* another:

- I **was walking** along the road when I **saw** Dave. So I **stopped** and we **had** a chat.

Compare:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When Karen arrived, we <b>were having</b> dinner. (= We had already started dinner before Karen arrived.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When Karen arrived, we <b>had</b> dinner. (= First Karen arrived and then we had dinner.)</li> </ul>
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E

There are some verbs (for example, know/want/believe) that are not normally used in the continuous (see Unit 4A):

- We **were** good friends. We **knew** each other well. (*not* 'we were knowing')
- I **was** enjoying the party but Chris **wanted** to go home. (*not* 'was wanting')

EXERCISES

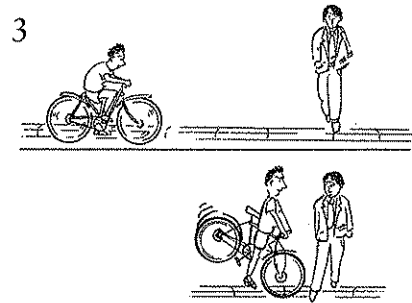
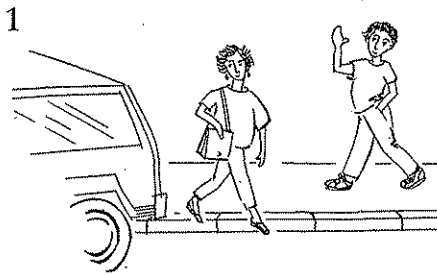
1 What were you doing at the following times? Write one sentence as in the examples. The past continuous is not always necessary (see the second example).

- 1 (at 8 o'clock yesterday evening) ... I was having dinner with some friends.
- 2 (at 5 o'clock last Saturday) ... I was on a train on my way to London.
- 3 (at 10.15 yesterday morning) .....
- 4 (at 4.30 this morning) .....
- 5 (at 7.45 yesterday evening) .....
- 6 (half an hour ago) .....

2 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use the past continuous.

- 1 Tom burnt his hand while he ... was cooking the dinner.
- 2 The doorbell rang while I .....
- 3 We saw an accident while we .....
- 4 Mary fell asleep while she .....
- 5 The television was on but nobody .....

3 Put the verbs into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.



I ... saw ... (see) Sue in town yesterday but she ..... (not/see) me. She ..... (look) the other way.

I ..... (meet) Tom and Ann at the airport a few weeks ago. They ..... (go) to Berlin and I ..... (go) to Madrid. We ..... (have) a chat while we ..... (wait) for our flights.

I ..... (cycle) home yesterday when suddenly a man ..... (step) out into the road in front of me. I ..... (go) quite fast but luckily I ..... (manage) to stop in time and ..... (not/hit) him.

4 Put the verbs into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.

- 1 Jane ... was waiting ... (wait) for me when I ... arrived ... (arrive).
- 2 'What ..... (you/do) this time yesterday?' 'I was asleep.'
- 3 '..... (you/go) out last night?' 'No, I was too tired.'
- 4 'Was Carol at the party last night?' 'Yes, she ..... (wear) a really nice dress.'
- 5 How fast ..... (you/drive) when the accident ..... (happen)?
- 6 John ..... (take) a photograph of me while I ..... (not/look).
- 7 We were in a very difficult position. We ..... (not/know) what to do.
- 8 I haven't seen Alan for ages. When I last ..... (see) him, he ..... (try) to find a job in London.
- 9 I ..... (walk) along the street when suddenly I ..... (hear) footsteps behind me. Somebody ..... (follow) me. I was frightened and I ..... (start) to run.
- 10 When I was young, I ..... (want) to be a bus driver.

# If I do... and If I did...

Compare these examples:

(1) Sue has lost her watch. She thinks it may be at Ann's house.

SUE: I think I left my watch at your house. Have you seen it?

ANN: No, but I'll have a look when I get home. **If I find** it, I'll tell you.

In this example, Ann feels there is a real possibility that she will find the watch. So she says: **If I find...**, I'll...

(2) Ann says: **If I found** a wallet in the street, I'd take it to the police.

This is a different type of situation. Here, Ann is not thinking about a real possibility; she is *imagining* the situation and doesn't expect to find a wallet in the street. So she says: **If I found...**, I'd (= I would)... (not 'If I find..., I'll...').

When you imagine something like this, you use **if + past** (if I found / if you were / if we didn't etc.). But the meaning is *not* past:

- What would you do if you won a million pounds? (we don't really expect this to happen)
- I don't really want to go to their party, but I probably will go. They'd be offended **if I didn't** go.
- Sarah has decided not to apply for the job. She isn't really qualified for it, so she probably wouldn't get it **if she applied**.

If I won a million pounds...



We do not normally use **would** in the **if-part** of the sentence:

- I'd be very frightened **if somebody pointed** a gun at me. (not 'if somebody would point')
- **If I didn't** go to their party, they'd be offended. (not 'If I wouldn't go')

But it is possible to say '**if... would**' when you ask somebody to do something:

- (from a formal letter) I would be grateful **if you would send** me your brochure as soon as possible.
- 'Shall I close the door?' 'Yes, please, **if you would**.'

In the other part of the sentence (not the **if-part**) we use **would ('d) / wouldn't**:

- If you took more exercise, you'd (= you would) probably feel healthier.
- **Would you mind** if I used your phone?
- I'm not tired enough to go to bed yet. I **wouldn't** sleep (if I went to bed now).

**Could** and **might** are also possible:

- If you took more exercise, you **might** feel healthier. (= it is possible that you would feel healthier)
- If it stopped raining, we **could** go out. (= we would be able to go out)

Do not use **when** in sentences like those on this page:

- They would be offended **if we didn't** accept their invitation. (not 'when we didn't')
- What would you do **if you were** bitten by a snake? (not 'when you were bitten')

For **if** and **when** see also Unit 25C.

EXERCISES

Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 They would be rather offended if I didn't go to see them. (not/go)
- 2 If you took more exercise, you would feel better. (feel)
- 3 If I was offered the job, I think I ..... it. (take)
- 4 I'm sure Amy will lend you the money. I'd be very surprised if she .....  
(refuse)
- 5 If I sold my car, I ..... much money for it. (not/get)
- 6 A lot of people would be out of work if the factory ..... (close down)
- 7 What would happen if I ..... that red button? (press)
- 8 Liz gave me this ring. She ..... very upset if I lost it. (be)
- 9 Mark and Carol are expecting us. They would be disappointed if we  
..... (not/ come)
- 10 Would Tim mind if I ..... his bicycle without asking him? (borrow)
- 11 If somebody ..... in here with a gun, I'd be very frightened. (walk)
- 12 I'm sure Sue ..... if you explained the situation to her. (understand)

You ask a friend questions. Use What would you do if...?

- 1 (Maybe one day your friend will win a lot of money.)  
What would you do if you won a lot of money?
- 2 (Your friend's car has never been stolen but perhaps one day it will be.)  
What .....
- 3 (Perhaps one day your friend will lose his/her passport.)  
.....
- 4 (There has never been a fire in the building.)  
.....

Answer the questions in the way shown.

- 1 A: Shall we catch the 10.30 train?  
B: No. (arrive / too early) If we caught the 10.30 train, we'd arrive too early.
- 2 A: Is Ken going to take the examination?  
B: No. (fail) If he .....
- 3 A: Why don't we stay at a hotel?  
B: No. (cost too much money) If .....
- 4 A: Is Sally going to apply for the job?  
B: No. (not / get it) If .....
- 5 A: Let's tell them the truth.  
B: No. (not / believe us) If .....
- 6 A: Why don't we invite Bill to the party?  
B: No. (have to invite his friends too)  
.....

Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

- 1 If you took more exercise, you'd feel better.
- 2 I'd feel very angry if .....
- 3 If I didn't go to work tomorrow, .....
- 4 Would you go to the party if .....
- 5 If you bought some new clothes, .....
- 6 Would you mind if .....

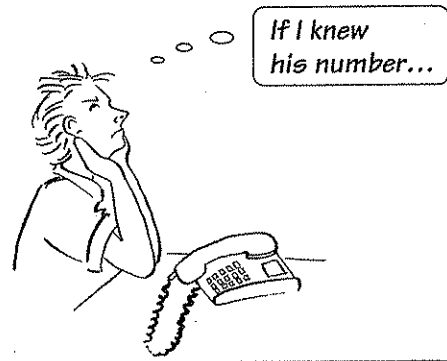
# If I knew... I wish I knew...

Study this example situation:

Sue wants to phone Paul but she can't do this because she doesn't know his number. She says:

If I knew his number, I would phone him.

Sue says: If I knew his number... This tells us that she *doesn't* know his number. She is imagining the situation. The *real* situation is that she doesn't know his number.



When you imagine a situation like this, you use *if + past* (if I knew / if you were / if we didn't etc.). But the meaning is present, not past:

- Tom would read more if he **had** more time. (but he doesn't have much time)
- If I **didn't** want to go to the party, I wouldn't go. (but I want to go)
- We wouldn't have any money if we **didn't** work. (but we work)
- If you **were** in my position, what would you do?
- It's a pity you can't drive. It would be useful if you **could**.

We use the past in the same way after *wish* (I wish I knew / I wish you were etc.). We use *wish* to say that we regret something, that something is not as we would like it to be:

- I wish I knew Paul's phone number.  
(= I don't know it and I regret this)
- Do you ever wish you could fly?  
(you can't fly)
- It rains a lot here. I wish it **didn't** rain so often.
- It's very crowded here. I wish there **weren't** so many people. (but there are a lot of people)
- I wish I **didn't** have to work. (but I have to work)



After *if* and *wish*, you can use *were* instead of *was* (if I were / I wish it were etc.). So you can say:

- If I **were** you, I wouldn't buy that coat.    *or*    If I **was** you...
- I'd go out if it **weren't** raining.                    *or*    ...if it **wasn't** raining.
- I wish it **were** possible.                                    *or*    I wish it **was** possible.

We do not normally use *would* in the *if*-part of the sentence or after *wish*:

- If I **were** rich, I **would** have a yacht. (*not* 'If I **would** be rich')
- I wish I **had** something to read. (*not* 'I wish I **would** have')

Sometimes *wish...would* is possible ('I wish you **would** listen'). See Unit 40C.

Note that *could* sometimes means 'would be able to' and sometimes 'was/were able to':

- You **could** get a job more easily                    (you **could** get = you would be able to get)
- if you **could** speak a foreign language.        (you **could** speak = you were able to speak)

**EXERCISES**

*Put the verb into the correct form.*

- 1 If I **knew** his number, I would phone him. (know)
- 2 I **wouldn't buy** that coat if I were you. (not/buy)
- 3 I ..... you if I could, but I'm afraid I can't. (help)
- 4 We would need a car if we ..... in the country. (live)
- 5 If we had the choice, we ..... in the country. (live)
- 6 This soup isn't very good. It ..... better if it wasn't so salty. (taste)
- 7 I wouldn't mind living in England if the weather ..... better. (be)
- 8 If I were you, I ..... (not/wait). I ..... now. (go)
- 9 You're always tired. If you ..... to bed so late every night, you wouldn't be tired all the time. (not/go)
- 10 I think there are too many cars. If there ..... so many cars (not/be), there ..... so much pollution. (not/be)

*Write a sentence with If... for each situation.*

- 1 We don't visit you very often because you live so far away.  
If you **didn't live so far away**, we'd visit you more often.
- 2 He doesn't speak very clearly – that's why people don't understand him.  
If he ..... more ....., people .....
- 3 That book is too expensive, so I'm not going to buy it.  
If the book ....., I .....
- 4 We don't go out very often because we can't afford it.  
.....
- 5 It's raining, so we can't have lunch in the garden.  
.....
- 6 I have to work tomorrow evening, so I can't meet you.  
.....

*Write sentences beginning I wish...*

- 1 I don't know many people (and I'm lonely). I wish I **knew more people**.
- 2 I don't have a key (and I need one). I wish .....
- 3 Ann isn't here (and I need to see her). .....
- 4 It's cold (and I hate cold weather). .....
- 5 I live in a big city (and I don't like it). .....
- 6 I can't go to the party (and I'd like to). .....
- 7 I have to work tomorrow (but I'd like to stay in bed). .....
- 8 I don't know anything about cars (and my car has just broken down).  
.....
- 9 I'm not lying on a beautiful sunny beach (and that's a pity).  
.....

*Write your own sentences beginning I wish...*

- 1 (somewhere you'd like to be now – on the beach, in New York, in bed etc.)  
I wish I .....
- 2 (something you'd like to have – a computer, a job, lots of money etc.)  
.....
- 3 (something you'd like to be able to do – sing, speak a language, fly etc.)  
.....
- 4 (something you'd like to be – beautiful, strong, rich etc.)  
.....