

English grammar help for learners of English.

The past simple tense (guided discovery exercise). (page 1)

Use the following words to fill the spaces below. Write one answer for each space.

 change | implicit | became | negatives | completed actions | both | help | did |
 irregular | questions | were | didn't | two weeks ago | infinitive | did + not

The verb form in the past simple doesn't 1, _____ with the different persons.
 For example:

I | you | she, he, it | we | they walked.

There is one exception - the verb 'to be':

I | he, she, it | was very hungry yesterday.
 You | we | they | 2, _____ very hungry yesterday.

We can classify the English verb into two groups: regular verbs and 3, _____
 verbs. All regular English verbs end in 'ed'. Examples:

I worked, she waited, we played.

Irregular verbs are very common in English and sometimes difficult to use as some
 have different meanings. Examples with the irregular verb 'get':

I got angry = I 4, _____ angry.



I got a cold = I fell ill with a cold.



I got my hair cut = I asked somebody to cut my hair.



You should study irregular verb forms and their different meanings.

We use past simple tense to talk about 5, _____ actions in the past. These
 actions are connected to a time in the past. This past time can be explicit ie. we use
 a past tense time expression: Examples:

I had a lovely dinner last night.
 I went jogging last weekend.
 The world was a better place then.
 I studied the English verb tables 6, _____ .

The past time can be 7, _____ ie. we're thinking about a time in the past but
 we don't use a past tense time expression. Examples:

I had a lovely dinner. (I'm thinking about last night.)
 I went jogging. (I'm thinking about last weekend.)
 The world was a better place. (I'm thinking about then.)
 I studied the English verb tables. (I'm thinking: two weeks ago.)

The past simple tense (guided discovery exercise). (page 2)

To make a question in the past simple we use the auxiliary 8, _____ with most verbs. The verb after the auxiliary must be in its 9, _____ form.

Examples:

Nick and Emma saw a good film last night.
Did Nick and Emma see a good film last night?

She helped her friend with her English homework.
Did she 10, _____ her friend with her English homework?

To make a negative sentence in the past simple we use 11, _____ (+ infinitive). This becomes 'didn't' in informal written language or in speech.

Examples:

Nick and Emma did not see the film last night.
 Nick and Emma didn't see the film last night.

She did not help her friend with her homework.
 She 12, _____ help her friend with her homework.

The verb 'to be' and 'to have' in past simple are exceptions. 'To be' doesn't use 'did' in its past form. It inverts with the subject in 13, _____ and 'was' and 'were' combine with 'not' in negatives without 'did'. Examples:

The book was on the table yesterday.
Was the book on the table yesterday?
 The book wasn't on the table yesterday.

The verb 'To have' can invert with the subject or use 'did' in past simple questions. In 14, _____, the verb 'have' can use 'did + not' or just 'had + not'. This sometimes depends on meaning.

They had a lot of money when they were younger.
Did they have a lot of money when they were younger?
Had they a lot of money when they were younger?
 ('Had' has a possessive meaning.)

The tourists had a meal in a local restaurant.
Did the tourists have a meal...?
~~Had the tourists a meal...?~~
 The tourists didn't have a meal...
~~The tourists hadn't a meal...~~
 ('Had' here means 'ate')

From the above examples we can deduce that when 'had' has a possessive meaning, we can use 15, _____ forms. But we can only use the 'did' form with the verb 'to have' if the meaning is not possessive.

Teacher's notes.

The past simple tense (answers).

Time for activities: 30 mins. approx. Level: elementary.

Answers

1. change
2. were
3. irregular
4. became
5. completed actions
6. two weeks ago
7. implicit
8. did
9. infinitive
10. help
11. did + not
12. didn't
13. questions
14. negatives
15. both

There is quite a long section here which insists on the use of past simple when past time is explicitly or implicitly expressed. This may sound a little obvious and redundant. The reason for this is to pre-empt errors where students use present perfect to talk about completed actions, which are also connected to past time periods. This is not possible of course in English eg. "I have seen the film yesterday". You may (or may not if you think it too confusing) explain the following after the written exercise is finished.

"It is important to remember that if we talk about an action connected only to a time in the past, we use past simple. This is because sometimes we talk about completed actions in the past with another tense called 'present perfect'. But the actions of present perfect are also connected to the present and they don't mention the past. Example:

I have had a lovely dinner (and now I feel satisfied)."

Follow-up materials:

This can be combined with activity 2, which is a practice exercise on the structure of the past simple plus an oral activity to put their knowledge into spoken practice.

Enjoy the lesson!

[You can now do activity 2 on the past simple...](#)

[For English irregular verb tables and more free lesson plans and exercises please visit English Spanish Link...](#)