

6.1 Past simple of to be: was and were

GR6.1))

- 1 We **were** in Lisbon last weekend.
- 2 She **wasn't** in class yesterday morning.
- 3 When **were** they born?
- 4 A **Was** it on the table last night?
B No, it **wasn't**.
- 5 A **Were** they teachers in 2010?
B Yes, they **were**.

Was and **wasn't** (was not) are the past forms of **is** and **isn't**.
Were and **weren't** (were not) are the past forms of **are** and **aren't**.

Positive (+)		Negative (-)		
I		I		
He	was	He	wasn't	
She		She		
It		It		at home.
We		We		
You	were	You	weren't	
They		They		

Yes/No questions and short answers

Yes/No questions (?)			Short answers			
Was	I he she it	at home?	Yes, I Yes, he Yes, she Yes, it	was.	No, I No, he No, she No, it	wasn't.
Were	we you they		Yes, we Yes, you Yes, they	were.	No, we No, you No, they	weren't.

- We often use **was/were** with past time expressions, e.g. *last week, in 2003, 500 years ago, yesterday*.

*I was at work two hours ago.
It wasn't very hot yesterday.*

We use **was/were** with **born**.
I was born in 1990.

Wh- questions

To make a **Wh-** question we use a **Wh-** question word before **was/were**.

The word order is the same as for yes/no questions.

What was your last job?

Why was she in Spain last week?

When were they born?

1 Complete the sentences and short answers with the past simple form of the verb **to be**.

- 1 We **are** in Venice now.
We **were** in Rome last month.
- 2 They **are** in the office today.
_____ they in the office last night? No, they _____.
- 3 I **am** on the bus now.
I _____ on the train two hours ago.
- 4 She **'s** in class now.
_____ she in class at 9 a.m. this morning?
Yes, she _____.
- 5 We **are** at the post office now.
We _____ at the police station at 3.30 p.m. yesterday.
- 6 It **is** cold today.
_____ it cold yesterday? No, it _____.
- 7 They **are** at the cinema now.
_____ they at the cinema last Friday? Yes, they _____.
- 8 My glasses **are** in my bag.
My glasses _____ on my head five minutes ago.

2 Complete the past simple questions 1–10 using the words in (brackets).

- 1 **Where** **were** you and your wife last week? (Where)
- 2 _____ your first boss? (Who)
- 3 _____ your father born? (When)
- 4 _____ your favourite toy when you were five? (What)
- 5 _____ you quiet in the meeting yesterday? (Why)
- 6 _____ good last night? (the film)
- 7 _____ on holiday last week? (they)
- 8 _____ our colleagues two hours ago? (Where)
- 9 _____ your desk messy yesterday? (Why)
- 10 _____ the hotel cheap? (Why)

3 Match answers a–j to questions 1–10 in exercise 2.

a No, it wasn't .	f In Paris.
b Mr Chen.	g Yes, they were .
c It wasn't close to the beach.	h I was very busy.
d I was tired.	i In a meeting.
e In 1966.	j My toy car.

4 Complete the text. Use **was/were** or **wasn't/weren't**.

This year I'm unemployed and unhappy. Last year was different. Last year the sky **1 was** blue all summer and I **2** happy. I **3** an engineer. My house **4** full of flowers and music. My children **5** at an expensive school. There **6** lots of interesting books on my desk. In my living room there **7** two computers and a big TV. I **8** very rich. My life **9** easy and we **10** worried about the future.