

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 He She It	was	I He She It	wasn't	at home.
We You They	were	We You They	weren't	

Yes/No questions and short answers

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

- 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?

- 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'm 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.

- 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)

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

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| 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. |

- 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.