

PAST SIMPLE - USED TO

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 department store.
- ☐ We **invited** them to our party, but they **decided** not to come.
- ☐ The police **stopped** me on my way home last night.
- ☐ Laura **passed** her exam 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 | <input type="checkbox"/> Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music. |
| see → saw | <input type="checkbox"/> We saw Tanya in town a few days ago. |
| go → went | <input type="checkbox"/> I went to the cinema three times last week. |
| shut → shut | <input type="checkbox"/> It was cold, so I shut the window. |

C

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

I	enjoyed		you	enjoy?		I		enjoy
she	saw	did	she	see?		she	didn't	see
they	went		they	go?		they		go

- ☐ 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** us to the party, so we **didn't go**.
- ☐ 'Did you **have** time to do the shopping?' 'No, I **didn't**.'

In the following examples, **do** is the main verb in the sentence (**did ... do / didn't do**):

- ☐ 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?

Exercises

5.1 Read what Laura says about a typical working day:



Laura

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, and I always sleep well.

Yesterday was a typical working day for Laura. 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 |
| 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. |

5.2 Complete the sentences using the following verbs in the correct form:

buy catch cost fall hurt sell spend teach throw write

- Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music.
- 'How did you learn to drive?' 'My father taught me.'
- We couldn't afford to keep our car, so we sold it.
- Dave fell down the stairs this morning and hurt his leg.
- Joe threw the ball to Sue, who caught it.
- Ann spent a lot of money yesterday. She bought a dress which cost £100.

5.3 You ask James about his holiday. Write your questions.

Hi. How are things?

Fine, thanks. I've just had a great holiday.

- Where did you go?
To the U.S. We went on a trip from San Francisco to Denver.
- How did you go? By car?
Yes, we hired a car in San Francisco.
- It's a long way to drive. How long did it take to get to Denver?
Two weeks.
- Where did you stay? In hotels?
Yes, small hotels or motels.
- Was the food good?
Yes, but it was very hot – sometimes too hot.
- Did you visit the Grand Canyon?
Of course. It was wonderful.

5.4 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 much. (enjoy)
- I knew Sarah was busy, so I didn't disturb her. (disturb)
- We were very tired, so we left the party early. (leave)
- The bed was very uncomfortable. I didn't sleep well. (sleep)
- The window was open and a bird flew into the room. (fly)
- The hotel wasn't very expensive. It didn't cost much to stay there. (cost)
- I was in a hurry, so I didn't have time to phone you. (have)
- It was hard carrying the bags. They were very heavy. (be)

A Study this example situation:

a few years ago

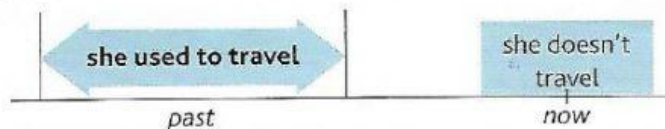


these days

Nicola doesn't travel much these days.
She prefers to stay at home.

But she **used to travel** a lot.
She **used to go** away two or three times a year.

She **used to travel** a lot = she travelled a lot often in the past, but she doesn't do this any more.



B Something **used to** happen = it happened often in the past, but no longer happens:

- ☐ I **used to play** tennis a lot, but I don't play very much now.
- ☐ David **used to spend** a lot of money on clothes. These days he can't afford it.
- ☐ 'Do you go to the cinema much?' 'Not now, but I **used to**.' (= I used to go)

We also use **used to** ... for things that were true, but are not true any more:

- ☐ This building is now a furniture shop. It **used to be** a cinema.
- ☐ I **used to think** Mark was unfriendly, but now I realise he's a very nice person.
- ☐ I've started drinking tea recently. I never **used to like** it before.
- ☐ Lisa **used to have** very long hair when she was a child.

C 'I **used to** do something' is past. There is no present. You cannot say 'I use to do'.

To talk about the present, use the present simple (I **do**).

Compare:

past	he used to play	we used to live	there used to be
present	he plays	we live	there is

- ☐ We **used to live** in a small village, but now we **live** in London.
- ☐ There **used to be** four cinemas in the town. Now there **is** only one.

D The normal question form is **did** (you) **use to** ... ?:

- ☐ **Did you use to eat** a lot of sweets when you were a child?

The negative form is **didn't use to** ... (**used not to** ... is also possible):

- ☐ I **didn't use to** like him. (or I **used not to** like him.)

E Compare **I used to do** and **I was doing**:

- ☐ I **used to watch** TV a lot. (= I watched TV often in the past, but I no longer do this)
- ☐ I **was watching** TV when Rob called. (= I was in the middle of watching TV)

F Do not confuse **I used to do** and **I am used to doing** (see Unit 61). The structures and meanings are different:

- ☐ I **used to live** alone. (= I lived alone in the past, but I no longer live alone)
- ☐ I **am used to living** alone. (= I live alone, and I don't find it strange or difficult because I've been living alone for some time)

Exercises

18.1 Complete the sentences with **use(d) to** + a suitable verb.

- Nicola doesn't travel much now. She used to travel a lot, but she prefers to stay at home these days.
- Sophie _____ a motorbike, but last year she sold it and bought a car.
- We moved to Spain a few years ago. We _____ in Paris.
- I rarely eat ice-cream now, but I _____ it when I was a child.
- Jackie _____ my best friend, but we aren't good friends any more.
- It only takes me about 40 minutes to get to work now that the new road is open. It _____ more than an hour.
- There _____ a hotel near the airport, but it closed a long time ago.
- When you lived in New York, _____ to the theatre very often?

18.2 Compare what Karen said five years ago and what she says today:



Now write sentences about how Karen has changed. Use **used to** / **didn't use to** / **never used to** in the first part of your sentence.

- She used to travel a lot, but she doesn't go away much these days.
- She used _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____
- _____ but _____

18.3 Write sentences about yourself like the examples. Begin **I used to ...** (I used to be/work/like/play/read etc.).

- I used to live in a small village, but now I live in London.
- I used to play tennis a lot, but I don't play any more.
- I used _____, but _____
- I _____
- _____

Now begin with **I didn't use to ...**

- I didn't use to read a lot, but I do now.
- I didn't _____
- _____