Tenses: Simple Present and Simple Past

Time and Tense

Read the sentences given below and do as directed. One has been done for you.

• If some action happened before now, on the timeline below, put the number of that sentence in the circle under past.
• If some action is happening at the present moment or happens every day, put the number of that sentence in the circle under present.

1. We ate pizza for dinner yesterday.
2. Father reads the newspaper.
3. We played football last Sunday.
4. The cat drank up all the milk yesterday.
5. Kavita practises the sitar every day.
6. The students study English every day.

Now read these sentences.
• Yesterday, I walked across the fields.
• I walk across the fields every day.

You will notice that the form of the verb walk changes in these sentences. The verb walk not only expresses an action, but it also tells us the time of action.

The tense of a verb tells us when the action happens.

We will learn about present tense and past tense now.
Simple Present Tense

Read these sentences.
• He comes to school by bus. (regular action)
• She likes ice cream.
• Janaki dances gracefully. (regular action)

In these sentences, the verbs tell us whether an action happens regularly or talks about people in general. These verbs are said to be in the simple present tense.

• We use the simple present tense to show that an action happens regularly or often. We use words like always, usually, sometimes, generally or every day to speak about such actions. For example,
  ○ He plays football every evening.
  ○ I take my pet for a walk every day.
  ○ I often help my mother to make breakfast.

• We also use the simple present tense to talk about generally accepted truths or facts. For example,
  ○ The sun rises in the east.
  ○ Monkeys love bananas.
  ○ The earth revolves around the sun.

Verb forms in the simple present tense
• We use the simple form of the verb with the pronouns I, we, you and they. Look at these examples.
  ○ I sing well.
  ○ We work in a bank.
  ○ They run very fast.
  ○ You help Tanish with his homework.

• We use the -s form of the verb with singular nouns, the pronouns he, she and it, or in case of a singular subject. For example,
  ○ She sings very well.
  ○ Beena runs every morning.
  ○ The tortoise moves very slowly.

• Verbs ending with -ch, -sh, -x and -o usually take an -es when used with singular nouns and the pronouns he, she and it. For example,
  ○ He brushes his teeth twice a day. (verb brush)
  ○ My father reaches his office early. (verb reach)
  ○ She washes the clothes in the evening. (verb wash)
• For verbs ending with -y, we drop the -y and add an -i and -es when we use them with the pronouns he, she and it, and singular nouns. For example,
  ○ A porter carries heavy loads. (verb carry)
  ○ My little brother cries a lot. (verb cry)
  ○ She always tries hard. (verb try)

A. Now, complete these sentences with the correct present tense form of the verb in brackets.

1. The elephant ____________ (use) its trunk to pick up things.
2. The boat ____________ (ferry) people to that island.
3. Cats ____________ (give) birth to many kittens at a time.
4. The old scientist ____________ (make) wonderful toys.
5. She ____________ (tidy) up the room every day.
6. The dog ____________ (obey) his master’s orders.
7. He ____________ (do) his homework regularly.
8. These pencils ____________ (belong) to Simon.
9. She usually ____________ (finish) her homework by five o’clock.
10. Whenever the dog ____________ (get) a bone, he ____________ (bury) it in the garden.

B. Use each subject and verb to make a sentence in the simple present tense. One is done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The dog</td>
<td>bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My mother</td>
<td>go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Our neighbour</td>
<td>make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My aunt</td>
<td>visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The guard</td>
<td>watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ankit</td>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• The dog barks at strangers.
C. Let us do a quick revision with the help of this table. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Simple form of verb</th>
<th>Verb form in present tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I, we, you, they</td>
<td>sing, work</td>
<td>sing, work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. he, she, it</td>
<td>sing, work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. he, she, it</td>
<td>make, arrive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. he, she, it</td>
<td>ferry, carry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. he, she, it</td>
<td>fix, push</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. he, she, it</td>
<td>play, pray</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Simple Past Tense**

Read these sentences carefully. What is common to the highlighted verbs? (Hint: When did these actions happen?)

- I walked to school yesterday.
- They played football last week.
- My brother and sister watched a movie last night.

The verbs in these sentences tell us that the actions happened sometime before now, that is, in the past.

Verbs that tell us about actions that happened in the past are called are in the **simple past tense**.

**Verb forms in the simple past tense**

Here are some of the ways in which we change verbs into the simple past tense.

- We usually add *-ed* to most verbs to change their form. For example,
  - She opened the door for the guests.
  - They laughed at his jokes.
  - The kitten looked around for its mother.

- For verbs that end in *-e*, we usually add *-d*. For example,
  - They closed the gates at 10 p.m. (verb close)
  - We lived in that house ten years ago. (verb live)
  - People queued outside the counters. (verb queue)
For verbs with a single syllable, we have to double the last letter and add -ed. For example,
- The thief grabbed her bag. (verb grab)
- She slammed the door. (verb slam)
- The teacher pinned the notice on the board. (verb pin)

For verbs that end in -y, we change the -y to -i and add -ed. For example,
- The porter carried the heavy load on his shoulders. (verb carry)
- My little brother cried a lot. (verb cry)
- She tried hard to get the job. (verb try)

Some verbs do not follow any of the above rules.
- My mother bought her grocery from this store. (verb buy)
- The farmer kept the chicken in the coop. (verb keep)
- I went with her to the fair. (verb go)

Notice that these verbs change completely when they change into the past tense.

A few verbs do not change their forms at all when used in the past tense. For example,
- The fisherman cast his net in the sea.
- This dress cost a thousand rupees.
- I put the clothes in the cupboard.
- He hurt his leg.

Notice that these verbs have a single syllable. They end with a consonant preceded by a vowel—grab, slam.

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- He hurt his leg.

The verbs that do not change into the simple past forms by adding -d, -ed or -ied are called irregular verbs.

D. Place these verbs in the simple past tense in the correct columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb + -ed</th>
<th>verb + -d</th>
<th>verb + double last letter + ed</th>
<th>verb + -ied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**

Notice that these verbs have a single syllable. They end with a consonant preceded by a vowel—grab, slam.

Note

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E. Tick the correct form of the verb in these sentences.

1. We **sold** our car.
2. I **heard** a noise.
3. The man **lost** his way.
4. He **met** his uncle.
5. I **wrote** a letter to my friend.
6. Ketan **bought** a new mobile phone.
7. The boys **found** treasure in the cave.
8. Flowers **grew** in the garden in spring.
9. The birds **flew** to long distances in winter.
10. The glass vase **fell** off the table and **broke** into pieces.

F. Rewrite the story after changing the highlighted verbs into the past tense.

Little Red Riding Hood is the story of a brave girl. One day, Little Red Riding Hood’s Mother **gives** her a lovely lemon pie to take to her grandmother. Her grandmother **lives** alone in a cottage in the middle of the forest. When Red Riding Hood **reaches** the cottage, she **finds** the door open. She **knocks** at the door and **cries**, ‘Grandma, may I come in?’ Her Grandma **says**, ‘Come in, my dear.’

Little Red Riding Hood **thinks** her grandmother **sounds** different. When she **goes** inside, she **is** surprised. Her Grandma **looks** different too. She **knows** that the person in the bed **is** not her grandmother. The person in the bed **is** the Big Bad Wolf! Just then, Grandma **hears** Little Red Riding Hood’s voice. She **shouts** loudly to warn Little Red Riding Hood. A woodcutter **hears** her cries and **rushes** to the cottage. He **kills** the wolf. Grandma **is** inside the cupboard. She **comes** out of the cupboard and **takes** her granddaughter in her arms. They **thank** the woodcutter and **offer** him some pie.

Recall

- The **tense** of a verb tells us when the action happens.
- The **simple present tense** is used for an action that is done regularly and for expressing facts.
- The **simple past tense** is used for an action that was done in the past.