

# ETpedia™

## Grammar

500 ideas  
and activities  
for teaching  
grammar

“

R

adverb

pronoun

A M H

tense

noun

F

O

?

verb

Daniel Barber and Ceri Jones

Series editor: John Hughes

[www.myetpedia.com](http://www.myetpedia.com)

**ENGLISH  
TEACHING**  
*professional*

---

---

---

# Contents

## Introduction

10 tips on using ETpedia Grammar .....	6
10 facts about the authors .....	7
10 techniques for teaching grammar .....	8
10 types of activities and games you'll find in ETpedia Grammar .....	11
10 types of activities and games you'll find in ETpedia Grammar .....	14

## The basics

1 The verb <i>to be</i> .....	16
2 <i>There is / there are</i> .....	19
3 Articles ( <i>a/an, the</i> , zero article) .....	22
4 Possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns and possessive 's .....	25
5 Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns, <i>one</i> and <i>ones</i> .....	28
6 The imperative .....	31
7 Quantifiers and countable and uncountable nouns .....	34

## Pronouns and clauses

8 Subject, object and relative pronouns .....	38
9 Reflexive pronouns ( <i>myself, yourself</i> , etc.) and reciprocal pronouns ( <i>each other, one another</i> ) .....	41
10 Indefinite pronouns ( <i>something, nobody, everywhere</i> , etc.) .....	44
11 Relative clauses .....	48

## Adjectives and adverbs

12 Adverbs of degree ( <i>very, really, absolutely</i> , etc.) .....	52
13 Comparisons (1): comparative and superlative adjectives .....	56
14 Comparisons (2): <i>as ... as ...</i> , adverbs, nouns .....	59
15 <i>Too</i> and <i>enough</i> .....	62

## Present forms

16 Present simple .....	66
17 <i>Like, love, hate + -ing</i> .....	69
18 Present continuous .....	72

## Modal verbs (present)

19 <i>Can/can't</i> (ability, possibility, requests and offers) .....	76
20 <i>Can/can't, must/mustn't</i> (permission, obligation and prohibition) .....	79
21 <i>Have to/don't have to, must/mustn't</i> (necessity and lack of necessity) .....	82

22	<i>Must, can't, could, couldn't, may and might</i> (speculation) .....	85
23	<i>Should, must, could</i> (giving advice and making suggestions) .....	88

### Past forms

24	Past simple ( <i>to be</i> ) .....	92
25	Past simple: regular and irregular verbs .....	95
26	Past continuous .....	98
27	Present perfect (1): <i>ever, never</i> .....	101
28	Present perfect (2) <i>already, yet, just</i> .....	104
29	Present perfect continuous: <i>for</i> and <i>since</i> .....	107
30	Past habits: <i>used to</i> and <i>would</i> .....	110
31	Past perfect .....	113
32	Reported speech (1) statements and questions .....	116
33	Reported speech (2) reporting verbs .....	119
34	Modal expressions in the past (ability, permission and obligation) .....	123

### Future forms

35	Present continuous (future arrangements) .....	128
36	<i>Going to</i> (future plans and predictions) .....	131
37	<i>Will</i> and <i>won't</i> .....	134
38	Present tenses in future time clauses .....	137
39	Future continuous ( <i>will be doing</i> ) and future perfect ( <i>will have done</i> ) .....	140

### Conditionals

40	Real conditionals (1) zero conditional .....	144
41	Real conditionals (2) first conditional .....	147
42	<i>Would</i> .....	150
43	Unreal conditionals (1) second conditional .....	153
44	<i>Would have, could have, should have</i> .....	156
45	Unreal conditionals (2) third conditional .....	159
46	<i>I wish, If only</i> .....	162

### Other verb forms

47	Question forms .....	166
48	Indirect questions .....	169
49	Verbs followed by a verb with <i>to</i> or <i>-ing</i> .....	172
50	Passive voice .....	175
10	more useful grammar resources .....	178

### Appendix

# 10 tips on using *ETpedia Grammar*

## 1. Everything in one place

*ETpedia Grammar* brings together ideas, tips and classroom activities for a one-stop, quick and easy reference. It's organised into 50 units with 10 ideas in each unit.

## 2. Finding the grammar point you need

You'll find the grammar you need on the Contents page. The points are ordered in themed sets (eg 'present forms', 'modal verbs') and are loosely based on the order you might teach them on a course (eg the verb 'to be' in Unit 1). Within each unit activities are sequenced from easy to more complex, in terms of both tasks and language, and you can choose to approach the units in whatever order best suits the needs of your learners.

## 3. Planning a lesson

Every unit provides you with 10 different ideas and activities. You might be looking for a single activity to supplement your coursebook, an alternative context to present a grammar point, or to revise the grammar from the previous lesson. Or you may use the unit to build an entire lesson.

## 4. For new teachers and experienced teachers

If you are new to teaching, this resource will be invaluable for supporting you on your way. If you've been teaching for a while, this resource might both remind you of techniques and activities you haven't used in a while and offer you fresh new ideas to increase your repertoire.

## 5. Introductions for each unit

You'll find a short introduction to the grammar with information on when it's normally taught and why it's used.


## 6. Early tips for presenting

Usually the first couple of ideas in a unit offer ideas for presenting the key points of the grammar.


## 7. Plenty of practice activities

The main part of the unit provides you with activities to practise the grammar in a fun, meaningful way.

## 8. Photocopiable activities

 Each unit contains one activity based on a photocopiable handout which you will find in the Appendix (pages 181–242).

## 9. Suggestions for homework and self-study

 Point 9 is always a task for students to do at home. Rather than typical homework activities, such as gapfill exercises, they instead suggest motivating tasks such as noticing how grammar works in real life or taking photos related to the grammar and presenting them.

## 10. Common difficulties

Every unit ends with tips on the difficulties students often have with the grammar. Often it highlights the way a student's first language might impact on the students' use of the grammar or the reasons why students confuse particular uses. This is especially helpful for anticipating problems students might have.

# 10 facts about the authors

---

---

1. We both live in the same southwestern corner of Spain.
2. We've both mainly taught in Spain: Ceri has also taught in the UK, Hungary and Italy, and Dan has also taught in the UK and Mexico.
3. We've both taught a range of levels, ages and course types, from beginner to advanced, from age 3 to 70+, from Business English to EAP.
4. We've both worked as Trinity TESOL Certificate and Diploma trainers, both face-to-face and online.
5. We've both been involved in writing various components for coursebook series for a number of publishers at a range of levels and for a range of contexts.
6. We both have teenage daughters who are very good friends.
7. We also have dogs who are great friends and love running on the beach.
8. We both travel a lot for work, though Dan packs a considerably heavier suitcase than Ceri due to his clumpy shoes.
9. Neither of us has climbed Mount Everest but we've both dabbled with rock climbing.
10. Neither of us could have written this book without all the ideas and inspiration from colleagues and students in all the classrooms and staff rooms, real and virtual, that we've worked in our combined 55+ years of teaching.

# 10 techniques for teaching grammar

Learning grammar (and teaching it) consists of two main stages: learning the meaning and form of each new structure, and putting it into practice. A variety of techniques are used in this book for both stages. Here are 10 of the most common and useful ones which feature in the book.

## 1. Boardwork presentations

For a quick and easy presentation of new language, the board is the obvious resource to exploit. Start by building a context. For example, a traveller's suitcase covered in stickers of places she's been provides an easy-to-establish context for the present perfect for experiences. Make sure you include on your board: the affirmative, eg a sticker saying 'Mexico' elicits *She's been to Mexico*; the negative, eg *She hasn't been to China*; and question forms and short answers, eg *Has she been to Malaysia? Yes, she has / No she hasn't*. Underline or use a different colour to highlight the structure, ie *has been*, contractions *I've / she's / etc.*, and aspects of pronunciation, eg *been = /bin/*. See Unit 18.1 and Unit 29.7 for examples of boardwork presentations of the present continuous and present perfect continuous.

## 2. Using the students and you, the teacher

A direct context for language can often be found in the lives and experiences of the people in the room. Personal contexts immediately show how applicable the grammar is, and can also be more memorable than stories of people from outside the students' worlds. Throughout the book we suggest activities where students talk about themselves, their experiences, their lives, their opinions. We also suggest ways that you can use stories from your own life to present grammar, for example in Unit 24.1 we suggest that the teacher use photos of themselves when they were younger to introduce *was/were*. Student photos can also be a great resource. Most students will have photos on their mobile phones that they can share with each other to support any number of practice activities.

## 3. Using realia

Bringing objects into the classroom or using the objects you find in the classroom can help bring a grammar point to life and create a physical memory hook. Realia can be used to create a context for the target language. In Unit 7.1, for example, we suggest using such things as a bag of rice, a glass of water, a balloon and a tea bag to introduce the concept of countable and uncountable nouns. It can also provide further practice. In Unit 4.6, for example, objects that the students have brought to class provide a talking point to present and practise possessive structures.

## 4. Dialogue building

This collaborative technique involves setting a scene and, with the students' help, writing a dialogue on the board including the language you want to focus on. In Unit 10.6, the teacher provides a framework for a dialogue between waiters and customers in a restaurant. This is a familiar situation in which the indefinite pronouns *something*, *anything* and *nothing* occur naturally. Students then either practise the dialogue in pairs as it is or with variations (eg different choices of food and drink, a different type of restaurant). A great way to push students towards memorising the language is to gradually erase the text, word by word, until the students are repeating the dialogue from memory.

## 5. Dictation

With grammar points where the written form is already familiar to the students, but where meaning needs to be explored in more depth, a quick and effective means of introducing the language is to dictate model sentences to the class. Dictation immediately gets students working with the language and tests listening skills and spelling, as well as grammatical knowledge. It also promotes conversation management skills, such as asking to clarify and repeat: *Sorry, could you say that again, please?* In Unit 9.4 the teacher dictates sentences containing verbs used with and without reflexive pronouns to start exploring the differences in meaning and use. Unit 33.3 involves another basic dictation to teach the meaning of reporting verbs.

## 6. Dictogloss

In a dictogloss, the teacher has a text prepared to dictate to the class, but instead of dictating it slowly to ensure students write a faithful copy, they read it at a more natural speed two or more times. Prepare a text of no more than 100 words (fewer for lower-level students). Read it out first for content, and check comprehension. Then tell students to write down keywords, such as nouns and verbs, as you read it out again. Explain that even though they will not be able to write every word, they should keep writing as much as possible. Using their notes, students in pairs or small groups reconstruct the text in complete sentences. The idea is not to reproduce the text verbatim, but to focus in on certain aspects of the language used. For example, Unit 30.6 is a dictogloss activity focusing on the use of *would* to talk about past habits. Others can be found in Units 14.3, 34.2 and 42.7.

## 7. Drilling

To help students pronounce new language correctly, get them to say it repeatedly so you can check for accuracy. By experiencing the movement of the mouth as they say it, students reinforce their learning in a different way from when they write it down and see it. Simple drilling can be either choral, ie all students repeat the structure at the same time, or individual. A suggested order is to let students practise chorally first, but to insist on individual repetition so that you can check everyone is pronouncing it correctly.

There are ways to vary drilling so that it doesn't get repetitive. Substitution drilling involves the teacher prompting students to substitute words for other words in a drilled sentence, for example:

T: *He's been working at the office.* → S1: *He's been working at the office.*

T: *they* → S2: *They've been working at the office.*

T: *at home* → S3: *They've been working at home.*

T: *watch TV* → S4: *They've been watching TV at home.*

See a simple substitution being used in Unit 9.1. Drilling can be *disguised* as a game, as in the circular drill in Unit 48.2, where students inadvertently 'drill' each other. And although the board game in Unit 43.4 is not recognisably drilling, students need to repeat the second conditional over and over in order to win the game.

## 8. Songs

Another popular way of encouraging students to repeat structures as well as to make them memorable is through songs, eg *If I had a million dollars* by the Barenaked Ladies (see Unit 43.6). Choose songs that contain the target language multiple times and which contain a natural stress pattern for it, too, eg **If I had a million dollars, I'd buy you a fur coat**. Songs can be used to present the target language through listening tasks such as gap-fills or re-ordering the lines or words in the lyrics. They also offer repeated exposure to the language and, if your students enjoy singing, can also offer a chance to practise pronunciation.

## 9. Exploiting feedback stages

Feedback on activities is not just about seeing how many questions students got right; it is an opportunity to achieve several teaching objectives: to check understanding, correct persistent errors, share interesting information, revise rules and to draw conclusions. Other ways of exploiting this crucial stage at the end of activities include:

- ▶ reformulation: in Unit 25.2, students use questions to find out when their partners last did certain things, eg, *When did you last go to the cinema?* However, during feedback they must use affirmative sentences: *Lorena last went to the cinema on Friday night.*
- ▶ critical thinking: as well as asking students *what* they answered, we can also ask *Why?* In Unit 40.3, they are asked why they voted for their favourite slogans, for example.
- ▶ remembering/summarising: one way of carrying out feedback is to get students to work in pairs or groups to remember everybody else's answers, effectively drilling the target language.

## 10. Error correction

Students want and expect correction from their teacher. Choosing which mistakes to correct, when to do so and how, are complex questions. It's important, however, to remember that students who need the most correction may not be those that make the most or biggest mistakes. Lower-level or quiet, shy students may benefit from less correction so that they are not discouraged from using English, however imperfectly.

We correct students in the hope that they won't keep making those mistakes. To encourage them to think about their errors, let them try out new language, listening out for errors of use. Then point out the errors and show them the corrections. Finally, let them do the activity again, this time with those common errors fresh in their minds. In a shopping roleplay in Unit 5.3, for example, students can perform the roleplay first, you correct any errors, then they swap roles and try again.



# 10 types of activities and games you'll find in ETpedia Grammar

The aim of *ETpedia Grammar* is to provide you with a wide range of classroom activities that lend themselves to engaging practice with the most common grammar points taught in the English language classroom. In particular, you'll find some popular games that have been adapted to suit different grammar points. Here's a preview of what you can find – some of our favourite grammar games with suggestions for grammar points they can be used for. We're sure you will be able to think of more!

## 1. Bingo!

In traditional bingo, players have a grid with numbers, which they cross off when they hear them. In grammar bingo, the grid contains items of the language you want to practise, eg comparatives, question tags or irregular verbs. To save preparation time, students draw their own 3 x 3 grids in their notebooks (or 4 x 4 for a longer game) and fill them with items of their choice, picked from a list provided by the teacher. Before the game, write the list of items on the board. For a 3 x 3 grid, you'll need a minimum of 12 items on the board; for a 4 x 4 grid you'll need a minimum of 20 items. For example, if the aim of the game is to practise irregular past participles, write a selection of irregular past participles on the board (*seen, been, bought, etc.*). Students choose past participles to fill their grid. Next, prepare spoken prompts for the items on the board, eg *Have you BEEEP the new Kate Winslet film?* (where 'BEEEP' represents a gap where the past participle *seen* should go).

Read the prompts out, giving players time to cross off the corresponding item if it appears on their grid. The object is for a student to be the first player to cross off a line of three or four items in a row. The winner shouts 'Bingo!' to announce they have completed a row.

For more 'Bingo!' activities, see Unit 17.4 (short answers) and Unit 25.4 (irregular past verbs).

## 2. Rock, paper, scissors

This is a game for two people. Players use one hand to make one of three shapes at the same time, ie after 1 ... 2 ... 3 ...! The shapes are a sheet of paper (hand held out flat), a pair of scissors (two fingers held out apart) and a rock (a fist). Paper beats rock, rock beats scissors and scissors beat paper. If both players play the same shape, it is a draw.

In the classroom you can use the game to liven up peer testing. You can choose an exercise from your coursebook or workbook, or use a list of test items. Students play the game for each item and the winner tests the loser.

Here's an example of how it can be used to test knowledge of a set of time expressions that go with *for* or *since*:

Students play Rock, paper, scissors; A wins, so A tests B:

A: *Yesterday?*

B: *Since yesterday.*

A: *Correct.*

For an example of how the game can be used to practise past participles, see Unit 50.3.

### 3. Twenty questions

This game provides practice of *yes/no* questions. One player thinks of a person or a thing and the other players ask up to 20 *yes/no* questions to find out who or what they are thinking of. A variation is that each player thinks of the name of a famous person or fictional character and writes it on a sticky note, which they stick to the forehead or back of the player to their left. Everyone except the wearer of the note can see who they are. Players take turns to find out who they are by asking *yes/no* questions, eg *Am I a woman? Am I dead? Do I often appear on TV? Was I a singer?* etc. To practise past tenses, limit the people to historical characters; to practise questions with *Is it ...?*, ask students to guess a noun from a lexical set. Unit 1.7 provides an example of how it can be used to practise direct questions and Unit 48.4 for indirect questions.

### 4. I went to market ...

The object is to remember an ever-increasing list of items. The first player says, *I went to market and I bought some apples*. The next player repeats what the first player said and adds an item to the list, eg *I went to market and I bought some apples and a cabbage*. The third player further develops the list, eg *I went to market and I bought some apples, a cabbage and a litre of milk*. Play continues until a player cannot remember an item or says items in the wrong order, in which case they are out of the game. The last person still in the game is the winner.

In its classic form, the game is good for revision of vocabulary, but as it stands it can also be used to practise quantifiers (*some, a/an, a few, a kilo of ...*). Adapt the game slightly to activate other grammar areas. For example, *Last summer, I ...* gets students using past tenses (*I went to my grandmother's house, I swam in the sea, I learnt how to ride a horse ...*). Complicating it by saying why you went to different places gets students practising the infinitive of purpose: *I went to the greengrocers to buy some bananas, I went to the garage to fill up the car, I went to ...* See Unit 7.4 for an example of how it can be used to practise quantifiers.

### 5. Kim's game

To prepare this memory game, find 15–20 small objects that students know the name of in English, eg classroom stationery, food items or things you take on holiday. Arrange the objects on a tray and hide them under a cloth. Show the objects and tell students they have 60 seconds to memorise them. After 60 seconds, cover them again. Working individually or in pairs, students write down what they remember. Elicit the items one by one before finally uncovering the objects for students to check their answers. The student or pair who has remembered most objects wins. A variation involves removing one item at a time, and asking students to tell you which item you have removed.


This game can be used to practise *There is/are/was/were* (see Unit 2.2) and prepositions of place (see Unit 24.3).

## 6. Pelmanism

Before the lesson, make between 8 and 20 pairs of cards containing the target language (see Units 9.3, 33.8, 38.2 and 47.8 for examples). In some cases you may want to ask your students to prepare the cards. Pairs might be individual words, eg *take – taken*, or two parts of a sentence, eg *They have been married for ... – ... 30 years*, depending on the grammar you wish to practise.

The object of the game (also known as the Memory Game and Pairs) is to win pairs of cards by matching them up. Cards are spread out face-down on a table. Players take turns to turn over two cards in the hope that they match in the specified way. If there is no match, the player turns the two cards face-down again and play moves to the next person. As the game progresses, players try to remember where cards were so they can make pairs successfully. The winner is the player who holds the most pairs when all pairs have been found.

## 7. Snakes and ladders

 Make one copy of the board on page 235 for every three to five players. Prepare at least 20 *Challenge!* cards testing students on recently learnt grammar. There are examples of *Challenge!* cards which test the passive voice on page 236, but you needn't write them yourself; simply copy items from grammar practice activities in coursebooks, such as gap-fills, word ordering activities, etc.

The object is to be the first player to reach the finish. Put students into groups and hand out one board per group. Students take turns to toss a coin (they can use small objects from their pockets as counters). They move forward one space if they throw heads and two spaces if they throw tails. If players land on a square at the bottom of a ladder, they move up the ladder. If they land on a square at the top of a snake they slide down the snake. All other squares are *Challenge!* squares. When a player lands on a *Challenge!* square, the person to their left picks up a *Challenge!* card and reads it out. If the player answers correctly, they can stay there. If they fail to answer correctly, they go back to their original square.

## 8. Grammar Casino

Write eight or more sentences including the target language on separate cards or prepare them as a slideshow. At least half of the sentences should contain an error (see Unit 49.8 for examples). Prepare plenty of tokens so that each team has at least 20, and make more for yourself to distribute to the teams during the game. These can be as simple as small scraps of paper, or you might want to use toothpicks or similar small objects.

The aim is to identify whether sentences are correct or not, and to win tokens by betting on the answer. Students work in teams of two or three. Each team makes two cards: one with a big tick and one with a big cross. Show the first sentence for 10 seconds; on card, a mini whiteboard or in a slideshow. Give the teams time to discuss whether it is correct and to place their bet. Teams place between one and five tokens in front of them on their desks, depending on how certain they are about whether the sentence is correct or not.

On the count of three, teams vote by showing either the tick or the cross (voting must be simultaneous). Elicit the answer and a correction if necessary. If the teams are right, they double their tokens. If they lose, they lose their tokens. Nominate an assistant to help you distribute tokens. Continue with the next sentence. The team with the most tokens at the end is the winner. Use this game to raise awareness of common errors around a single grammar area or a variety of recently learnt areas.

Alternative procedure: instead of betting, students bid as if in an auction against each other to buy sentences. The winning team is the one with the most correct sentences.

## 9. Swap seats if ...

The object is to swap seats without losing a seat. This is a way to wake up a sluggish class and reorganise the seating plan, as well as to practise many areas of grammar. Arrange the seats in the classroom in a circle. Tell students that they have to move to a different seat in the circle if the statement you read is true for them. For example, to practise the present perfect, say *Swap seats if you have eaten sushi*. Everyone who has eaten sushi stands up and moves to a different seat. For the present continuous, say *Swap seats if you are wearing blue jeans*. You'll need to write at least 12 sentences like this before class. Add a competitive element by taking away a seat each time so that someone will be left without a chair and will be out. When you have run out of *Swap seats if ...* sentences, invite students to take turns making up similar sentences for the rest of the class. Unit 27.7 provides an example of how this game can be used to practise the present perfect with *never*.

## 10. Table tennis

The aim is to win 'rallies' by being the last player to contribute to an exchange of some sort (see Unit 27.5 for an example). The students stand up and face each other as if across a mini tennis court. The first player says a word or phrase and mimes a tennis serve; their opponent has to (1) respond correctly and (2) say a second word or phrase, miming a return shot within a maximum of five seconds. The first player responds similarly. For example, to practise the interrupted past continuous, the 'rally' might go:

A: He was running in the park ...

B: ... when a dog bit his leg. We were having dinner at a restaurant ...

A: ... when we saw a famous pop star. She, er ...

B: Time's up! I win!

# 24 Past simple (to be)

When introducing students to the past simple for the first time, you may want to look first at the verb *to be*. The form is very simple and easy to practise in a range of contexts. It also whets the students' appetites and primes them for the use of other verbs in the past simple (see Unit 25).

## 1. Childhood photos

Find two or three photos of yourself at different points in time in the past. Show the first one to the class. Tell them about the photo using the phrases, *I was [age]*, *I was in [place]*, *I was with [person/people]* and a comment, such as *It was a lovely day*. Elicit the sentences from the class and write them on the board. Underline *was* and ask students what verb it is and what time it refers to. Then write these three questions on the board: *How old were you? Where were you? Who were you with?* Underline *were* and highlight the inversion in the question. Show the class a second photo. Prompt students to ask you the questions.

## 2. Yes, I was. No, I wasn't.

Write a random collection of place expressions on the board, for example:

*at home*

*at work*

*in bed*

*at school*

*at the supermarket*

*in the gym*

*on the bus*

*at the bus stop*

*on a train*

*at the station*

*in the kitchen*

*at my computer*

*in a restaurant*

*in a shop*

*in the park*

Ask the students what they have in common (Answer: they're places). Then, call out a time in the past (eg *8am this morning!*) and call out the question: *Where were you?* Students call out their answers, choosing an expression from the board. If their answer isn't on the board, they can add it. Prompt the students to use *I was at/in/on ...* Do this a few times. Then call out a *yes/no* question specifying a time and a place; for example, *Were you on a bus at 6pm yesterday?* Prompt students to call out, *Yes, I was!* or *No, I wasn't!* Repeat a few times so the students get familiar with the question. They then work in pairs and ask each other questions until they have collected five instances of *Yes, I was* and five of *No, I wasn't* from their partner. The first student to collect five of each is the winner.

## 3. What's missing?

This game practises *it was / they were* with prepositions of place (see Unit 2.2 for another version of this game). Ask your students for various personal objects and place them on a table. Tell the students they have 30 seconds to look at the objects and remember what's there and where it is. Ask the students to close their eyes and remove one of the objects. Tell the students they can open their eyes and ask them: *What's missing?* When they identify the missing object, ask them: *Where was it?* and elicit an answer using a preposition of place. Ask them other questions if appropriate (eg *What colour was it? Was it big or small?*). Put the object back in the same position and repeat the exercise. This time, remove two objects that are placed next to each other so you can practise questions and answers with *they*. Students work in groups of four or more and repeat the game with a new set of objects. The students take it in turn to remove the objects and ask the questions.

#### 4. Birthday coincidences

Ask the students the question *When were you born?* (Note: *to be born* is treated as a lexical chunk here, as students only need to manipulate the verb *to be*). Prompt students to shout out their birth date. They can give the whole date or just the year or month. Then prompt them to ask you. Model the answers: *I was born on July 17, 1964 at 6 o'clock, in a hospital in Swansea.* Highlight the verb and the prepositions. Then write the following questions on the board:

*What month were you born?*

*What day were you born?*

*Where were you born?*

*What year were you born?*

Students mingle, asking the questions. They say *Me too* if their answer is the same. They need to find at least one classmate whose answer is the same for each of the questions. In the feedback stage, find out which day, month, time and year are the most common in the class.

#### 5. Guess who?

Write five short sentences about a famous person or fictional character from the past using the verb *to be*. For example, you could write:

*He was American.*

*He was born in the 1930s.*

*He was tall and dark.*

*He was a singer.*

*He was the King.*

(Answer: Elvis Presley)

Choose someone that you think most students in the class will know. Read the sentences out one by one and take guesses after each sentence. If the students still haven't guessed after they've heard the five sentences, let them ask *yes/no* questions to help them guess. Students then work in small groups to write a similar description of a different famous person or character from the past using *was* and *were*. They then read their sentences to the class, who try to guess who it is.

#### 6. It was a dark, cloudy night

Write the sentence on the board. Explain that it is the beginning of a story and elicit what kind of story it might be. Elicit more descriptive details using *was/were* by asking questions (for example: *Was there a moon? Were there any people on the streets? Were there any cars? Where was everybody?*) Write the description on the board (for example: *There was no moon. The streets were empty. There were no cars. Everybody was at home in their houses. There was just one person on the street, a tall man in a dark coat ...*). Highlight the use of *there* with *was* and *were*. Students work in groups to write the opening sentences of a totally different story, full of light and life. They read their descriptions out loud to each other and vote on the most interesting scene.

## 7. Party time

Ask the students to imagine they were at a birthday party at the weekend. If they actually were at a birthday party, they don't need to imagine! Write these questions on the board and ask the students to think of the answers for their real or imagined party, without saying anything. Though they can ask you for language if they need to.

*How was the party?*

*Where was it?*

*Who was there?*

*What was the food like?*

*Was the music good?*

Students then mingle, asking each other about the parties using the questions on the board. In the feedback ask them to talk about any similarities between their parties.

## 8. Memory test



Make one copy of the handout per group on page 207. Cut each handout in half. Students work in groups of three or four. Tell the students that you are going to show them a picture for 30 seconds and that they need to try and remember as much as they can about it. Give each group a copy of the handout face down. Let them look at the picture for 30 seconds; then tell them to turn it back over, face-down again. Collect the handouts from the groups. Now hand out a copy of the questions to each group. Ask them to write the answers to the questions in full sentences using the verb *to be*. The first group to answer all the questions correctly is the winner.

## 9. Weather watch



Ask students to keep a weather journal over the next week, using weather symbols and noting the temperature. In the next class, they compare their journals (which should be the same!) and interpret the symbols using *was/wasn't*, for example, *On Monday it was cold and cloudy.*

## 10. Common difficulties

Some students may confuse the use of *was* and *were* for second and third person, but generally speaking, this mistake is soon ironed out.





# 25 Past simple: regular and irregular verbs

The past simple is a useful tense that is very easy to introduce, recycle and review in a range of different contexts. It is generally introduced in the second half of an elementary course; it's important to build on and recycle irregular verbs as much as possible.

## 1. What did you do at the weekend?

For a simple first introduction to the past simple, build up a simple conversation on the board by asking a student some questions, for example:

- ▶ *Did you have a good weekend?*
- ▶ *Yes, I did.*
- ▶ *What did you do?*
- ▶ *I went to the cinema with some friends.*

Encourage students to offer alternative answers (eg *No, I didn't / Well, it was OK / I stayed at home / I watched a movie on TV / I had dinner with my family*) and plant a couple of negative examples (*I didn't go out / I didn't do anything special*). Ask students to identify the question form, the negative form, short answers and point out that there are both regular and irregular past forms. Highlight the *-ed* for the regular verbs and explain that many of the most common verbs are irregular (eg *go – went, have – had*). Students then ask each other about what they did at the weekend. They must find three similarities and one difference and report back to the class. Build conversations like this into your classroom routine in future classes to give repeated practice of the past simple.

## 2. When was the last time?

This activity is an extension of Activity 1, presenting new scenarios for the students to discuss once they have learnt more past verbs. Present the question form: *When did you last ...?* and elicit or give different endings, eg, *... go to the cinema, ... eat out, ... buy a present*. First, invite a student to ask you one of the questions. When you have answered, elicit follow-on questions using *What did you ... [see/eat/buy]? Where did you ... [go]? Who did you ... [go with]? Did you ... [have a good time]?* etc. Students then ask and answer similar questions in pairs and report back to the class. In the feedback, find out who has done each action most recently.

## 3. -ed endings

To raise awareness of the pronunciation of the *-ed* endings of regular verbs, prepare a list of 10 verbs with the infinitive and regular past forms (eg *play – played*). Five of the verbs should end in /t/ or /d/ (eg, *wait, want, need, visit, decide*) and five should end in other sounds (eg *play, watch, listen, walk, dance*). First read out the verbs, both the infinitive and the past simple form, and ask the students to identify which ones have an additional syllable in the past form. Then read out the past verbs only in random order and ask students to stand up if the verb form has an /ɪd/ ending.

Divide the class into two groups. Ask them to write sentences, each containing one of the verbs. They then take turns to read their sentences to the other group, who listen for and repeat the past verb. If the second group repeat it correctly, they get a point for their team. If the teams are drawing on points at the end of the game, read out a 'bonus sentence' for a 'sudden death' decision on the winners.

#### 4. Past simple bingo

Elicit verbs whose past forms you've studied recently and write their infinitive form on the board, asking each time if they are regular or irregular in the past. Write them in two columns – one for regular verbs and one for irregular verbs. Make sure you have at least 10 of each. Draw a bingo grid on the board with four rows and four columns. Students copy it into their notebooks. They then fill the grid with verbs from the board at random, taking from both lists. In the meantime, write the verbs on strips of paper and drop them into an envelope. Explain that they are going to play bingo, and that to win, they have to get four verbs in a row (horizontally, vertically or diagonally) and shout out *Bingo!* Pick a strip of paper from the envelope. Make up a sentence containing that verb in the past form and say it to the class. Students listen out for any verbs that they have on their bingo grid. If they have it, they cross it off. They must not say anything. Repeat until one of the students calls out *Bingo!* That student then reads out the four verbs in a row they crossed out, giving the infinitive and the past form. Ask the class to recall the sentences they were embedded in. You can continue if you want, asking the winner to take over as the bingo caller. Alternatively, start again with a new grid.

#### 5. What a great excuse!

Excuses in the form of short narratives comprising a sequence of past actions are a useful context for practising the past simple. Students work in groups to brainstorm possible excuses for not doing their homework. The groups read their excuses out to the class and the whole class categorises them as (a) possible, (b) crazy, or any other category that you or they choose. Then ask each group to come up with the most elaborate excuse they can think of for being late to class. Tell them they must include a minimum number of past verbs (eg five). The groups read their excuses to the class who listen and make sure that five verbs are used. You may want to nominate one of the contributions for a 'best excuse' prize.

#### 6. Story circles

Start the story with a simple sentence such as: *One day, I was in town when I heard a strange noise ....* After the first sentence, 'pass the story' to one of the students, who has to continue it. They add an action and then pass the story baton to one of their classmates. (You can use an object to physically hand over to the next person if you wish.) You can do this as a whole-class activity or in large groups. At the end, the students work in pairs to recall the whole story.

#### 7. Dice stories



Make a copy of the handout on page 208 so that you have one for every group of three or four students. Give each group a copy of the handout and some dice (alternatively they can use a dice-rolling app). They throw the dice six times to decide on the main events, characters and locations in their story. If they throw the same number twice within the same category, they will need to roll again. They decide on the story and prepare to share it with the class. If you want to add a competitive edge, ask the students to discuss which stories were the most exciting, the most unusual and the funniest.

## 8. Yes, I did

This game practises *yes/no* questions and short answers. The basic point of the game is to get as many *Yes, I did* answers as possible from your partner in a given time. First ask students to write down as many *yes/no* questions as they can in the past using *Did you ...* and a past time expression. Give them a few examples, eg *Did you have pizza last weekend? Did you watch the football last night?* Then model the game, with the students asking you questions and winning points for each *Yes, I did* answer. (You have to be honest!) Students then play the games in groups of three with one student arbitrating, counting the *Yes, I did* answers and challenging if they think the student is not answering honestly. Each group plays three times and the student who has elicited the most instances of *Yes, I did* wins.

## 9. Did, had, went



Explain to students that *did*, *had* and *went* are three of the most common irregular verbs in the past simple, and they're very useful because you can use them to say a lot of different things. Their challenge is to keep a very simple journal every day before the next lesson. At the end of each day, they must write three sentences about that day using the verbs *did*, *had* and *went*. They can't repeat the same actions. In the next class, they share their sentences with their classmates. (If you have classes every day, you can spread this out over a week.)

## 10. Common difficulties

One of the main problems students have with the past simple is learning the irregular past verbs and manipulating the negative and question forms. They may also have some problems initially with the pronunciation of the *-ed* ending for regular verbs. Common mistakes include over-using the *-ed* ending (eg *\*buyed* instead of *bought*), using past forms instead of infinitives in questions and negatives (eg *\*Did you went? \*I didn't went*) and pronouncing all *-ed* endings as /Id/.

## Unit 25.7: Dice stories

---

---

Follow the instructions to write a story.

1. Who are your main characters? Roll the dice twice.
  - 1 = an old man wearing a hat and walking with a stick; he has a thick beard
  - 2 = two teenage girls; they look like twins
  - 3 = a female police officer
  - 4 = a young boy, around 10 years old
  - 5 = a shaggy sheep dog
  - 6 = a power-dressing businesswoman
2. Where does your story take place? Roll the dice once.
  - 1 = a cemetery
  - 2 = a beach
  - 3 = a park
  - 4 = an empty industrial park
  - 5 = a busy city street with skyscrapers
  - 6 = a quiet country lane
3. Roll the dice three times to choose some of the main actions.
  - 1 = a person running
  - 2 = a person hiding
  - 3 = a person driving a car
  - 4 = a person swimming
  - 5 = a person falling
  - 6 = a person shouting

Now work together to think of a story that includes all your ingredients.

Sample