



- PART A** Regular Verbs in the Past Tense
- PART B** Irregular Verbs in the Past Tense
- PART C** A Troublesome Verb in the Past Tense:  
*To Be*
- PART D** Troublesome Pairs in the Past Tense:  
*Can/Could, Will/Would*

## Part A

### Regular Verbs in the Past Tense

Regular verbs in the past tense take an *-ed* or *-d* ending:

1. The captain *hoisted* the flag.
2. They *purchased* a flat screen TV yesterday.
3. We *deposited* a quarter in the meter.

- *Hoisted, purchased, and deposited* are regular verbs in the past tense.
- Each verb ends in *-ed* or *-d*.

**PRACTICE 1** Fill in the past tense of the regular verbs in parentheses.\*

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ (raise) my arms in a move called "embrace the tiger."
2. Then I \_\_\_\_\_ (shift) my weight and \_\_\_\_\_ (walk) forward on my right foot to start the next move, "stroke the peacock's tail."

\* If you have questions about spelling, see Chapter 38, "Spelling," Parts D, E, and F.

3. After stepping forward with my left foot, I \_\_\_\_\_ (reach) out my left hand and \_\_\_\_\_ (pull) back my right arm.
4. Unfortunately, my muscles \_\_\_\_\_ (clench), which \_\_\_\_\_ (result) in an awkward movement.
5. Talking calmly to myself, I \_\_\_\_\_ (relax) and \_\_\_\_\_ (start) again.
6. Then I \_\_\_\_\_ (move) fluidly to a new position.
7. These positions, which connect and flow into each other, \_\_\_\_\_ (evolve) over the centuries into what we now call tai chi.
8. Though tai chi \_\_\_\_\_ (develop) from the martial arts, today it emphasizes relaxation and stress reduction in addition to flexibility and fitness.
9. I chose to practice tai chi because it \_\_\_\_\_ (require) no special equipment, \_\_\_\_\_ (challenge) me physically, and \_\_\_\_\_ (promise) many benefits.
10. Tai chi is excellent exercise for all ages; a recent study \_\_\_\_\_ (show) that when older people \_\_\_\_\_ (perform) it regularly, they \_\_\_\_\_ (reduce) the likelihood of falling—and thus breaking bones—by almost 25 percent.

## Part B

### Irregular Verbs in the Past Tense

Irregular verbs do not take an *-ed* or *-d* ending in the past but change internally:

1. I *wrote* that letter in ten minutes.
2. Although the orange cat *fell* from a high branch, she escaped unharmed.
3. The play *began* on time but ended fairly late.

- *Wrote* is the past tense of *write*.
- *Fell* is the past tense of *fall*.
- *Began* is the past tense of *begin*.

Here is a partial list of irregular verbs:

**Reference Chart**  
**Irregular Verbs in the Past Tense**

Simple Form	Past Tense	Simple Form	Past Tense
be	was, were	leave	left
become	became	let	let
begin	began	lie	lay
blow	blew	lose	lost
break	broke	make	made
bring	brought	mean	meant
build	built	meet	met
buy	bought	pay	paid
catch	caught	put	put
choose	chose	quit	quit
come	came	read	read
cut	cut	ride	rode
deal	dealt	rise	rose
dig	dug	run	ran
dive	dove (dived)	say	said
do	did	see	saw
draw	drew	seek	sought
drink	drank	sell	sold
drive	drove	send	sent
eat	ate	shake	shook
fall	fell	shine	shone (shined)
feed	fed	sing	sang
feel	felt	sit	sat
fight	fought	sleep	slept
find	found	speak	spoke
fly	flew	spend	spent
forbid	forbade	split	split
forget	forgot	spring	sprang
forgive	forgave	stand	stood
freeze	froze	steal	stole
get	got	stink	stank
give	gave	swim	swam
go	went	take	took
grow	grew	teach	taught
have	had	tear	tore
hear	heard	tell	told
hide	hid	think	thought
hold	held	throw	threw
hurt	hurt	understand	understood
keep	kept	wake	woke (waked)
know	knew	wear	wore
lay	laid	win	won
lead	led	write	wrote

**PRACTICE 2** Fill in the past tense of the regular and irregular verbs in parentheses. If you are not sure of the past tense, use the chart on page 387. Do not guess.

### *Entrepreneurs Did It Their Way*

- (1) Beth Cross and Pam Parker \_\_\_\_\_ (work) in the same company.
- (2) After they \_\_\_\_\_ (become) friends, they \_\_\_\_\_ (discover) that they both \_\_\_\_\_ (love) to ride horses. (3) Both women also \_\_\_\_\_ (think) that their riding boots were extremely uncomfortable.
- (4) Eventually, they \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) their jobs, \_\_\_\_\_ (design) a new boot, and \_\_\_\_\_ (begin) their own company. (5) The boots \_\_\_\_\_ (catch) on, sales \_\_\_\_\_ (double) every year for the first four years, and they now sell boots in more than 2,000 outlets in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia.
- (6) Cross and Parker \_\_\_\_\_ (go) from being employees to being entrepreneurs, individuals who start their own business. (7) These risk takers \_\_\_\_\_ (choose) to leave their job security so that they could try their hand at producing a new product.
- (8) Duyen Le is a different type of entrepreneur, one who \_\_\_\_\_ (follow) his dream without ever joining a big company. (9) Le \_\_\_\_\_ (immigrate) to the United States from Vietnam. (10) Although he \_\_\_\_\_ (expect) to go into computer science, instead he \_\_\_\_\_ (open) a tiny Vietnamese restaurant in his neighborhood. (11) For years, he \_\_\_\_\_ (get) up at five each morning to search for the spices and vegetables he couldn't afford to have delivered.
- (12) When customers almost \_\_\_\_\_ (pour) in, a rival \_\_\_\_\_ (challenge) him by opening a new Vietnamese restaurant around the corner. (13) Le simply \_\_\_\_\_ (buy) out his competitor. (14) Encouraged by his large number of non-Vietnamese customers, he very successfully \_\_\_\_\_ (start) many restaurants, first in local Boston neighborhoods and then in upscale areas of the city.

(15) Not every entrepreneur \_\_\_\_\_ (want) to become one. (16) However, when companies \_\_\_\_\_ (downsize) in recent years, thousands of employees \_\_\_\_\_ (lose) their jobs. (17) They \_\_\_\_\_ (have) to find new positions—or become entrepreneurs. (18) As it \_\_\_\_\_ (happen), thousands upon thousands of ordinary workers \_\_\_\_\_ (find) greater satisfaction—and sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ (make) far more money—when they \_\_\_\_\_ (do) it their way!

## Part C

### A Troublesome Verb in the Past Tense: *To Be*

*To be* is the only verb that in the past tense has different forms for different persons. Be careful of subject-verb agreement:

Reference Chart— <i>To Be</i> Past Tense				
Singular			Plural	
	If the subject is	the verb is	If the subject is	the verb is
1st person:	I	was	we	were
2nd person:	you	were	you	were
3rd person:	he she it	was	they	were

- Note that the first person singular form and the third person singular form are the same—*was*.

Be especially careful of agreement when adding *not* to *was* or *were* to make a contraction:

was + not = wasn't  
were + not = weren't

**PRACTICE 3** Circle the correct form of the verb *to be* in the past tense. Do not guess. If you are not sure of the correct form, use the chart on page 389.

- Ophrah Winfrey (was, were) always an avid reader.
- In fact, books (was, were) sometimes her only comfort during her difficult childhood and painful adolescence.
- When her producers (was, were) considering a TV book club, the world's most popular talk show host (was, were) sure she could get the whole country reading.
- Her first book club selection (was, were) *The Deep End of the Ocean* by Jacquelyn Mitchard, the story of a kidnaped child.
- The public's rush to buy books (wasn't, weren't) anticipated.
- Mitchard's publishers (was, were) astonished to have to reprint the book nearly twenty times; all in all, 900,000 hardcovers and over 2 million paperbacks (was, were) sold.
- Winfrey's next choice (was, were) *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison, a classic novel that (was, were) almost twenty years old.
- About 300,000 copies (was, were) in print, but after Winfrey chose it, that figure (was, were) over 1,400,000.
- Every book club pick (was, were) a huge success, and even people who didn't read much found they (was, were) eagerly awaiting Winfrey's next selection.
- Between 1996 and 2002, the club's official close, millions (was, were) inspired to love reading, and many Winfrey-based book discussion groups continue to this day.

## Part D

### Troublesome Pairs in the Past Tense: *Can/Could, Will/Would*

Use **could** as the past tense of **can**.

- Maria is extraordinary because she *can* remember what happened to her when she was three years old.
- When I was in high school, I *could* do two sit-ups in an hour.

- In sentence 1, *can* shows the action is in the present.
- In sentence 2, *could* shows the action occurred in the past.

**PRACTICE 4** Fill in either the present tense *can* or the past tense *could*.

1. Tom is so talented that he \_\_\_\_\_ play most music on the piano by ear.
2. He \_\_\_\_\_ leave the hospital as soon as he feels stronger.
3. Last week we \_\_\_\_\_ not find fresh strawberries.
4. When we were in Spain last summer, we \_\_\_\_\_ see all of Madrid from our hotel balcony.
5. As a child, I \_\_\_\_\_ perform easily in public, but I \_\_\_\_\_ no longer do it.
6. Anything you \_\_\_\_\_ do, he \_\_\_\_\_ do better.
7. Nobody \_\_\_\_\_ find the guard after the robbery yesterday.
8. These days, Fred \_\_\_\_\_ usually predict the weather from the condition of his bunions.

Use **would** as the past tense of **will**.

3. Roberta says that she *will* arrive with her camera in ten minutes.
4. Roberta said that she *would* arrive with her camera in ten minutes.

- In sentence 3, *will* points to the future from the present.
- In sentence 4, *would* points to the future from the past.

**PRACTICE 5** Fill in either the present tense *will* or the past tense *would*.

1. Sean expected that he \_\_\_\_\_ arrive at midnight.
2. Sean expects that he \_\_\_\_\_ arrive at midnight.
3. I hope the sale at the used car lot \_\_\_\_\_ continue for another week.
4. I hoped the sale at the used car lot \_\_\_\_\_ continue for another week.
5. When Benny had time, he \_\_\_\_\_ color-code his computer disks.
6. When Benny has time, he \_\_\_\_\_ color-code his computer disks.
7. The chefs assure us that the wedding cake \_\_\_\_\_ be spectacular.
8. The chefs assured us that the wedding cake \_\_\_\_\_ be spectacular.

**PRACTICE 6 REVIEW**

Proofread the following essay for past tense errors. Then write the correct past tense form above the line.

*The Birth of Video Games*

(1) With their vivid images, realistic sound effects, and imaginative characters, today's computer games look more like television and movies than like the simple electronic paddle-and-ball game that preceded them. (2) Yet only three decades ago, with the birth of Pong, the home entertainment industry change forever.

(3) As early as 1958, Willy Higinbotham, a New York physicist, invented an interactive version of table tennis with which he entertain visitors to his laboratory. (4) He used a 15-inch monitor to display his game, but he never patent it. (5) Three years later, students at MIT created another interactive game, Spacewar, but it required a powerful and expensive computer that (in those days before microchips) taken up several rooms in a building.

(6) Everything changed with Nolan Bushnell, the father of the video game industry. (7) He seen both Higinbotham's game and Spacewar and believed he could design a computer chip small enough to handle a single video game. (8) Bushnell name his new company Atari, hired some fellow engineers, and go to work. (9) In July 1972, Atari introduce Pong, the first electronic game for the mass market. (10) Little more than a black-and-white TV console with two wheels underneath to control the paddles, Pong became an overnight sensation in arcades and bars across the United States.

(11) People of all ages could play Pong, a simple game in which two players bounced a digital ball back and forth until one player miss. (12) Bushnell knowed that a home version using a television set was possible, but he needed financial backing. (13) Then Sears Roebuck offered to invest if its stores can be the sole distributor. (14) Soon Home Pong swepted the country and outsold all other items in Sears's 1975 Christmas Catalogue.