The use of simple past tense

For a completed action in a time before now
I met my husband in 1993

For events that were true for some time in the past
They lived in Russia for three years

For a list of completed actions in the past
Ryan came in, took off his coat and sat down

For habits in the past
When I was a child, I played the piano

For past facts
He did not like eggs before

To talk about an action in the past that takes place in the middle of another action
When she arrived, I was watching TV
1) For a completed action in a time before now

Use simple past to talk about a completed action that started and finished at a specific time in the past.

**EXAMPLES**

- Albert Einstein **developed** the general theory of relativity.
- I **met** my husband in 1993.
- The cat **broke** the lamp yesterday.
- Last year, I **traveled** to Canada.
- She **did not eat** anything for 2 days.
- They **played** baseball over twenty years ago.
- **Did** you **open** the door last night?
- What **did you do** last weekend?
- Why **didn’t you do** your homework?

2) For events that were true for some time in the past

Use simple past to indicate the duration of past events.

**EXAMPLES**

- They **lived** in Russia for three years.
- The baby **did not cry** for five minutes.
- I **talked** on the phone for fifteen minutes.
- He **waited** for two hours.
3) For a list of completed actions in the past

Use simple past to tell a story or a list of completed actions in the past in order to express actions which follow each other.

EXAMPLES

- Ryan came in, took off his coat and sat down.
- Yesterday, I had a very rough day. I woke up late so I missed my train to work.
- I bought a cup of tea and a newspaper. I found a chair to sit on. I drank my tea and read the newspaper.
- Did you add flour, pour in the milk, and then add the eggs?

4) For habits in the past

Use simple past to talk habitual or repeated actions that took place in the past.

EXAMPLES

- She saw him every day.
- When I was a child, I played the piano.
- Tom visited his parents every weekend.
- I drove to work every day.
- Did you play the violin when you were young?
5) For past facts

Use simple past to talk about past facts which are no longer true.

EXAMPLES
- He did not like eggs before.
- Did you live in Senegal when you were younger?

6) To talk about an action in the past that takes place in the middle of another action

Use simple past to talk about an action in the past taking place in the middle of another action.

EXAMPLES
- When she arrived, I was watching TV.
- They were playing volleyball on the beach when she broke her arm.
- I was having a bath when the phone rang.
Adverb placement

You can use adverbs such as: always, never, once, frequently, just, rarely, etc. with the simple past tense.

EXAMPLES

- You **always** invited me to your birthday parties.
- She **never** played volleyball in the colleague.
- I met him **once**.
- He **frequently** changed jobs.
- Did you **just** call her?
- I **just** wanted to say what I mean.
- Kevin **rarely** missed classes.