

9.12 The present tenses in typical contexts

9.12.1 The simple present and present progressive in commentary
 The simple present and the present progressive are often used in commentaries on events taking place at the moment, particularly on radio and television. In such cases, the simple present is used to describe rapid actions completed at the moment of speaking and the progressive is used to describe longer-lasting actions:
MacFee passes to Franklyn. Franklyn makes a quick pass to Booth. Booth is away with the ball, but he's losing his advantage.

9.12.2 The simple present and present progressive in narration
 When we are telling a story or describing things that have happened to us, we often use present tenses (even though the events are in the past) in order to sound more interesting and dramatic. The progressive is used for 'background' and the simple tense for the main events:
I'm driving along this country road and I'm completely lost. Then I see this old fellow. He's leaning against a gate. I stop the car and ask him the way. He thinks a bit, then says, 'Well, if I were you, I wouldn't start from here.'

9.12.3 The simple present in demonstrations and instructions
 This use of the simple present is an alternative to the imperative (> 9.51). It illustrates step-by-step instructions:
First (you) boil some water. Then (you) warm the teapot. Then (you) add three teaspoons of tea. Next, (you) pour on boiling water...

9.12.4 The simple present in synopses (e.g. reviews of books, films, etc.)
Kate Fox's novel is an historical romance set in London in the 1880's. The action takes place over a period of 30 years...

9.12.5 The simple present and present progressive in newspaper headlines and e.g. photographic captions
 The simple present is generally used to refer to past events:
FREAK SNOW STOPS TRAFFIC
DISARMAMENT TALKS BEGIN IN VIENNA

The abbreviated progressive refers to the future. The infinitive can also be used for this purpose (> 9.48.1):
CABINET MINISTER RESIGNING SOON (or: TO RESIGN SOON)

The simple past tense

9.13 Form of the simple past tense with regular verbs

The form is the same for all persons (> App 39).

pronunciation		spelling	
I	played /d/	arrive/arrived	
You	arrived /d/	wait/waited	
He	worked /t/	stop/stopped	
She	dreamed/dreamt /dri:md/ or /dremnt/	occur/occurred	
It	posted /t/	cry/cried	
We			
You			
They			

The regular past: pronunciation and spelling (> App 39)

Pronunciation of the regular past
 Verbs in the regular past always end with a -d in their spelling, but the pronunciation of the past ending is not always the same:

play/played /d/
 The most common spelling characteristic of the regular past is that -ed is added to the base form of the verb: *opened, knocked, stayed*, etc. Except in the cases noted below, this -ed is not pronounced as if it were an extra syllable, so *opened* is pronounced: /əʊpənd/, *knocked*: /nɒkt/, *stayed*: /steɪd/.

arrive/arrived /d/
 Verbs which end in the following sounds have their past endings pronounced /d/: /b/ *rubbed*; /g/ *tugged*; /dʒ/ *managed*; /f/ *filled*; /m/ *dimmed*; /n/ *listened*; vowel + /r/ *stirred*; /v/ *loved*; /z/ *seized*. The -ed ending is not pronounced as an extra syllable.

work/worked /t/
 Verbs which end in the following sounds have their past endings pronounced /t/: /k/ *packed*; /s/ *passed*; /tʃ/ *watched*; /ʃ/ *washed*; /f/ *laughed*; /p/ *tipped*. The -ed ending is not pronounced as an extra syllable.

dream/dreamed /d/ or dreamt /t/
 A few verbs function as both regular and irregular and may have their past forms spell -ed or -t pronounced /d/ or /t/: e.g. *burn, dream, lean, learn, smell, spell, spill, spoil* (> App 40).

post/posted /t/
 Verbs which end in the sounds /t/ or /d/ have their past endings pronounced /t/: *posted, added*. The -ed ending is pronounced as an extra syllable added to the base form of the verb.

Spelling of the regular past
 The regular past always ends in -d:

arrive/arrived
 Verbs ending in -e add -d: e.g. *phone/phoned, smile/smiled*. This rule applies equally to *agree, die, lie*, etc.

wait/waited
 Verbs not ending in -e add -ed: e.g. *ask/asked, clean/cleaned, follow/followed, video/wideoed*.

stop/stopped
 Verbs spell with a single vowel letter followed by a single consonant letter double the consonant: *beg/begged, rub/rubbed*.

occur/occurred
 In two-syllable verbs the final consonant is doubled when the last syllable contains a single vowel letter followed by a single consonant letter and is stressed: *pre-fer/preferred, re-fer/referred*. Compare: *'benefit/benefited, 'cliff/cliffed and 'profit/profited* which are stressed on their first syllables and which therefore do not double their