In English, we use six different tenses to talk about the past.

- The simple past (I worked.)
- The past continuous (I was working.)
- The present perfect (I have worked.)
- The present perfect continuous (I have been working.)
- The past perfect (I had worked.)
- The past perfect continuous (I had been working)

The differences between these structures are complicated and in some cases more than one structure is possible.

**The simple past tense**

**Forms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affirmative</th>
<th>Interrogative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I washed the car.</td>
<td>Did I wash the car?</td>
<td>I did not wash the car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She wrote a poem.</td>
<td>Did she write a poem?</td>
<td>She did not write a poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They accepted the invitation.</td>
<td>Did they accept the invitation?</td>
<td>They did not accept the invitation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contracted negatives are: I didn’t work; she didn’t wait etc.

Negative questions are: Did I not come? Or Did she not reply?

**Spelling of regular affirmative past tense forms**

Most regular verbs form their past tense forms by adding -ed.

- Work -> worked
- Stop -> stopped
- Start -> started
- Rain -> rained
- Show -> showed
- Help -> helped
Verbs ending in -e, merely add -d
Hope → hoped
Decide → decided

Verbs ending in consonant + -y change y to i and add -ed
Cry → cried
Study → studied

**Uses**

The simple past tense is the most normal tense for talking about past events. It can be used to talk about quickly finished actions, longer situations or repeated events.

- I saw Karan yesterday.
- Did I see Karan yesterday?
- Yes, I saw Karan yesterday.
- No, I didn’t see Karan yesterday.
- Susmita went to the market to buy some articles.
- Did Susmita go to the market?
- No, Susmita did not go to the market.
- I visited my brother last week.
- Did I visit my brother last week?
- Yes, I visited my brother last week.
- No, I didn’t visit my brother last week.