



FREE RESOURCE · GRAMMAR

Irregular verbs list

Irregular verbs do not add -ed in the past simple or past participle: go, went, gone; buy, bought, bought. A few dozen of them are used constantly. Learn them in pattern groups (all forms the same, two forms the same, three different forms) rather than in alphabetical order.

What to know

What irregular verbs are

Regular verbs make the past simple and the past participle with -ed: walk, walked, walked. Irregular verbs change in other ways, or not at all. Every verb has three forms to learn: the base form (go), the past simple (went) and the past participle (gone).

Pattern 1: all three forms the same

These verbs do not change. The easiest group to learn.

- cut, cut, cut
- put, put, put
- set, set, set
- let, let, let
- hit, hit, hit

Pattern 2: the past simple and past participle are the same

In this group the base form is different, but you only have one new form to learn. The group is large. Look for the shared endings.

- -ought or -aught: buy, bought, bought; bring, brought, brought; think, thought, thought; teach, taught, taught; catch, caught, caught.
- -ent: send, sent, sent; spend, spent, spent; lend, lent, lent.
- -ept, -elt or -eft: keep, kept, kept; sleep, slept, slept; feel, felt, felt; leave, left, left.
- -old or -eld: sell, sold, sold; tell, told, told; hold, held, held.
- other: build, built, built; have, had, had; make, made, made; pay, paid, paid; say, said, said; hear, heard, heard; find, found, found; meet, met, met; stand, stood, stood; sit, sat, sat; lose, lost, lost; win, won, won.

Pattern 3: three different forms

These are the verbs learners mix up most. The past simple and the past participle are different, so be careful in the present perfect: say I have written, not I have wrote.

- i, a, u: begin, began, begun; drink, drank, drunk; sing, sang, sung; swim, swam, swum.
- -ew, -wn: know, knew, known; grow, grew, grown; draw, drew, drawn; throw, threw, thrown; fly, flew, flown.
- o, o + en: speak, spoke, spoken; break, broke, broken; choose, chose, chosen.
- i, o + en: write, wrote, written; drive, drove, driven; ride, rode, ridden.

- past participle ends in -en: eat, ate, eaten; fall, fell, fallen; give, gave, given; take, took, taken; see, saw, seen.

Pattern 4: base form and past participle the same

A few verbs change in the past simple only: come, came, come; run, ran, run; and become, became, become, which follows come. Say I have come and she has run, not I have came.

Exercises

1. Yesterday I _____ a new phone.
 - a. buyed
 - b. bought
 - c. buy
2. She has _____ her homework already.
 - a. done
 - b. did
 - c. do
3. We have _____ the same teacher for two years.
 - a. has
 - b. had
 - c. have
4. He _____ the report last night.
 - a. written
 - b. writed
 - c. wrote
5. I have never _____ sushi.
 - a. eat
 - b. ate
 - c. eaten
6. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) She (2) has went (3) to the library (4) already.
7. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) We (2) seen (3) the results (4) yesterday.
8. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): grown / very / fast. / company / growed / The / has
9. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): twice. / spoke / manager / the / spoken / I / to / have
10. Correct this: *I have wrote three essays this week.*

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-

IELTS tip. Irregular verbs cause quick, easy-to-see mistakes in Speaking Part 2 and in Writing Task 1 trends. Keep a short personal list of the verbs you get wrong and check every past verb before you finish writing.

FOR TEACHERS · GRAMMAR

Irregular verbs list

AIM	Learners know the three forms of the most common irregular verbs in pattern groups and use them accurately in the past simple, present perfect and passive.
TIME	30 minutes
LEVEL	B1 to B2 (IELTS 5 to 6.5)
MATERIALS	This worksheet, one copy per learner; the free online practice for the audio

Warm-up

Write ten base forms on the board and ask learners to give the past simple. Mark which ones they got right and use the errors to open the lesson.

Lesson steps

1. Present the four patterns with a colour-coded chart and elicit the shared endings in pattern 2.
2. Play 'three forms, one point': in teams, learners shout all three forms of a verb you call.
3. Do a matching task: past participles to base forms, with examples in the present perfect.
4. Pairs tell each other a story using at least eight irregular past forms.
5. Learners write a short Task 1 paragraph in the passive and underline each past participle.

Extension

Learners keep a weekly list of irregular verbs from their own errors and test each other at the start of the next lesson.

Answer key

1. b) bought. Buy is irregular: buy, bought, bought.
2. a) done. After has, use the past participle: done.
3. b) had. Have, had, had. After have we need the past participle: had.
4. c) wrote. The past simple of write is wrote. Written is the past participle.
5. c) eaten. After have, use the past participle: eaten.
6. Part 2: *has went* → **has gone**. The past participle of go is gone.
7. Part 2: *seen* → **saw**. For a finished time (yesterday), use the past simple: saw.
8. The company has grown very fast. Grow, grew, grown. After has, the past participle is grown.
9. I have spoken to the manager twice. After have, use the past participle: spoken.
10. I have written three essays this week. Write, wrote, written. After have, use written.

Questions learners often ask

What are irregular verbs? Irregular verbs have past forms that do not end in -ed, such as go, went, gone or buy, bought, bought.

How many irregular verbs do I need to know? Start with the twenty or thirty that appear most often, such as be, have, do, go, make, take, see and say. You will meet the rest gradually.

What is the past participle? It is the third verb form, used after have, has and had and in the passive. For regular verbs it ends in -ed; for irregular verbs it needs to be learned, as in written or gone.

What is the best way to learn them? Group them by pattern, say all three forms aloud, and use each in a short sentence of your own.

Sources

- Swan, M. (2016). Practical English Usage, 4th edition. Oxford University Press.
- Carter, R. and McCarthy, M. (2006). Cambridge Grammar of English. Cambridge University Press.

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