ENGLISH STORY PODCAST

Was, Did & Had

Talk about yesterday with clear, natural past-tense sentences

EPISODE 12 | LEVEL A2-B1

Listen and read with Mia and Jake. Then practise the key vocabulary, useful phrases, listening skills, and speaking patterns from this episode.

Today's Small Win
Say three sentences about yesterday: one with was, one with did, and one with had.

Episode Guide

What you will learn

• Use was and were to describe feelings, places, and situations in the past.

• Form past questions and negatives correctly with did and did not.

• Use had for past food, events, experiences, and necessities.

• Avoid common mistakes such as “Did you went?” and “I didn't had.”

Word Box

past	the time before now
ago	used after a time period to show how long before now
recently	not long ago
mistake	something that is not correct

Say It Like This

“How was your weekend?”

“It was great, thank you.”

“What did you do yesterday?”

“I had a really busy day.”

“I didn't go out last night.”

Listen & Read Transcript

Read along while you listen. Audio-performance tags have been removed for easier reading.

JAKE	Mia, yesterday I go to the market, and I buy some bread.
MIA	Almost, Jake. But yesterday is in the past. So we say, "Yesterday I went to the market, and I bought some bread."
JAKE	Went and bought. Why is English so tricky?
MIA	It's not that tricky. Today, we're going to make it easy. Hello everyone, and welcome to the English Story Podcast. I'm Mia.
JAKE	And I'm Jake, the man who goes to the market in the past.
MIA	Today we're talking about three small words that help you talk about yesterday. Was, did, and had.
JAKE	By the end of this episode, you'll be able to say what you did, how you felt, and what you had, all in the past, and all in natural English.
MIA	And before we start, a quick tip. You can read the full transcript of this episode on our website, and listen to the audio while you read. The link is in the description, along with our free ebooks.
JAKE	Lots of valuable help, and all of it is free. So make yourself comfortable, get a cup of tea, and just listen to us talk.
MIA	Let's start with a small idea. When we talk to friends, we very often talk about the past. How was your weekend? What did you do? Did you have a nice time?
JAKE	So the past is not only for stories. It's for everyday conversation.
MIA	Exactly. And if you learn just these three small words, you can have a lot of conversations.
JAKE	Okay, it's time for our Word Box. These are four useful words for today. Listen, and then repeat after us.
MIA	The first word is past. The past is the time before now.
JAKE	Past. For example, in the past, I lived in a small town.
MIA	The next word is ago. Ago tells us how long before now something happened.
JAKE	Ago. For example, I started learning English two years ago.
MIA	The next word is recently. Recently means not long ago.
JAKE	Recently. For example, I recently watched a very good movie.

MIA	And the last word is mistake. A mistake is something that is not correct.
JAKE	Mistake. For example, it's okay to make a mistake when you are learning.
MIA	Let's say them one more time. Past.
JAKE	Past.
MIA	Ago.
JAKE	Ago.
MIA	Recently.
JAKE	Recently.
MIA	Mistake.
JAKE	Mistake.
MIA	Great job, everyone. You will hear these words again in the story.
JAKE	Let's begin with the first word. Was.
MIA	Was is the past of am and is. Today I am tired. Yesterday I was tired.
JAKE	And it's the past of is, too. Today she is at home. Yesterday she was at home.
MIA	Right. So was goes with I, he, she, and it. "I was happy." "He was late." "She was kind." "It was cold."
JAKE	And what about you, we, and they?
MIA	For those, we use were. "You were right." "We were at the park." "They were very busy."
JAKE	So was and were are the past of the verb be.
MIA	Exactly. And here is the nice thing. They are easy to use in questions. We simply change the order. "Was he late?" "Were you at home?"
JAKE	And the answers are short. "Yes, he was." "No, I wasn't."
MIA	Wasn't is the short form of was not. And weren't is the short form of were not. "We weren't tired." "They weren't at home."
JAKE	So let's practice. Imagine a friend asks, "How was your weekend?" What could you say?

YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	Here's one idea. "It was great, thank you. We were at my sister's house, and the weather was lovely."
JAKE	Perfect. Now, our second word. Did.
MIA	Did is the past of do. We use it in two very important ways.
JAKE	The first way is for questions. "Did you go to the park?" "Did she call you?" "Did they like the food?"
MIA	And the second way is for negatives. "I didn't go to the park." "She didn't call me." "They didn't like the food."
JAKE	And here's the most important rule of the day. After did and didn't, we use the simple verb. That means no ed, no s, and no past form.
MIA	So we say, "Did you go?" and not, "Did you went?"
JAKE	That is exactly the kind of mistake I made in my very first sentence today.
MIA	Yes, it is. And it's a very common one. You said "I go" for yesterday, and the past is "I went." Don't worry, everyone does this.
JAKE	So, did plus the simple verb. "Did you eat?" "Did he come?" "Did we win?"
MIA	And the negative is the same. "I didn't eat." "He didn't come." "We didn't win."
JAKE	I think I understand. Did already carries the past. So the main verb doesn't need to change.
MIA	That is a perfect way to say it. Did already carries the past.
JAKE	Okay. Let me try. Mia, did you cook dinner yesterday?
MIA	Yes, I did. I cooked pasta, and it was delicious.
JAKE	Did you eat it all?
MIA	No, I didn't. I kept some for lunch today.
JAKE	Smart. [cheerfully] Now, the third word. Had.
MIA	Had is the past of have. And it's one of the easiest, because it doesn't change. I had, you had, he had, we had, they had.
JAKE	We use it for food, events, and experiences. "I had pizza for lunch." "We had a great time." "She had a busy day."

MIA	And in a conversation, it's perfect for questions. "Did you have a nice weekend?" Notice that we say "did you have," and not "did you had."
JAKE	Again, did already carries the past. So we use the simple verb, have.
MIA	Exactly. And we can say, "I had a great weekend," or, "I didn't have much time."
JAKE	Here's another useful one. "I had to." It means it was necessary. "I had to wake up early." "She had to work late."
MIA	Very good. Now, let's put it all together in a short conversation. Imagine we're friends, and we meet on Monday morning.
JAKE	Hi, Mia. How was your weekend?
MIA	Hi, Jake. It was really nice, thank you. How about yours?
JAKE	It was good, but a little busy. On Saturday, I had to clean my apartment.
MIA	Oh, I know that feeling. Did you do anything fun?
JAKE	Yes, I did. In the evening, I went to my friend's house. We had pizza, and we watched a movie.
MIA	That sounds lovely. Was the movie good?
JAKE	It was okay, but the pizza was great. And what did you do?
MIA	I went for a long walk on Sunday morning. The weather was beautiful, and I had a coffee by the river.
JAKE	That sounds perfect. Did you go alone?
MIA	No, I didn't. I went with my sister. We talked for hours.
JAKE	Did you notice? In a short conversation, we used was, did, and had many times, and it sounded easy and natural.
MIA	And we also used small time words. On Saturday. In the evening. On Sunday morning. They help us tell the story in order.
JAKE	Let's learn some of those time words. They are very useful.
MIA	Yesterday. Last night. Last week. Last year.
JAKE	And ago. "Two days ago." "Three weeks ago." "Five years ago."
MIA	Notice that ago goes after the time. We say, "two days ago," not "ago two days."

JAKE	And recently is a good word for something that happened a short time ago. "I recently moved." "I recently started a new job."
MIA	Great. Now there is one more important thing. When we talk about the past, many verbs change. We call these irregular verbs.
JAKE	Irregular means they don't follow the usual rule. Let's listen to a few of the most useful ones.
MIA	Go becomes went. "I went to the shop."
JAKE	See becomes saw. "I saw a friend."
MIA	Eat becomes ate. "We ate lunch together."
JAKE	Buy becomes bought. "She bought a new bag."
MIA	And come becomes came. "He came home late."
JAKE	Don't try to learn them all today. Just learn one or two, and use them in real sentences.
MIA	And remember, many verbs are regular. You just add ed. "I walked." "We watched." "They cooked."
MIA	Now let's look at three common mistakes. Almost every learner makes them, so please don't feel bad.
JAKE	The first mistake is mixing was with another past verb. For example, "I was go to the shop."
MIA	The correct sentence is, "I went to the shop." We use was only with a feeling, a place, or a description. "I was happy." "I was at the shop."
JAKE	The second mistake is the one we talked about. "Did you went to the party?"
MIA	The correct sentence is, "Did you go to the party?" Remember, did already carries the past.
JAKE	And the third mistake is the same idea, with the negative. "I didn't had time."
MIA	The correct sentence is, "I didn't have time." After didn't, we use the simple verb.
JAKE	Let's say the correct ones together, so your mouth gets used to them. I went to the shop.
MIA	I went to the shop.
JAKE	Did you go to the party?
MIA	Did you go to the party?
JAKE	I didn't have time.

MIA	I didn't have time.
JAKE	Very good. Now, here is another tip. When your friend tells you something about the past, you can show interest with a short question.
MIA	For example, "Really? What happened next?" Or, "Oh, nice. How was it?" Or, "Who did you go with?"
JAKE	These small questions keep the conversation going, and they use the same words we learned today.
MIA	Let's try a short example. Jake, tell me about your last holiday.
JAKE	Okay. Last summer, I went to the beach with my family.
MIA	Oh, nice. How was it?
JAKE	It was wonderful. The water was warm, and we had ice cream every day.
MIA	Really? Did you swim a lot?
JAKE	Yes, I did. But I also made a mistake. I forgot my hat, and I got a very red nose.
MIA	Oh no. What did you do?
JAKE	I bought a big hat, and I looked very funny.
MIA	I'm sure you looked great.
JAKE	Did you notice? Mia didn't say very much, but her questions helped me tell the story. Questions are the secret of a good conversation.
MIA	And now you can ask them in the past. How was it? What did you do? Who did you go with?
JAKE	And now it's time for our segment called Say It Like This.
MIA	Here are five phrases you can use every day. Repeat after us. How was your weekend?
JAKE	How was your weekend?
MIA	It was great, thank you.
JAKE	It was great, thank you.
MIA	What did you do yesterday?
JAKE	What did you do yesterday?
MIA	I had a really busy day.

JAKE	I had a really busy day.
MIA	I didn't go out last night.
JAKE	I didn't go out last night.
MIA	Very good. Now you have five small phrases, and each one helps you talk about the past.
JAKE	Here is a quick bonus drill. I will say one word, and you choose was or were. Mia, let's try it together. "She." Was or were?
MIA	Was. "She was at home."
JAKE	"They." Was or were?
MIA	Were. "They were at the park."
JAKE	"You." Was or were?
MIA	Were. "You were very kind."
JAKE	And "it." Was or were?
MIA	Was. "It was a lovely day."
JAKE	Great. Now say them again in your own voice, and listen to how natural they sound.
JAKE	And now it's time for our Mini Story. This is a short story with today's new words inside it.
MIA	Our story today is about a man called Omar. Last Saturday, Omar woke up late. His alarm didn't ring, and he had a very important meeting at nine o'clock.
MIA	Omar was very worried. He had to get dressed in two minutes, and he didn't have time for breakfast. He ran to the bus stop. But the bus was already gone. Omar felt like crying, and then he started to laugh.
MIA	He called his friend and said, "I'm so sorry. I made a mistake, and I was late." His friend laughed and said, "It's okay. The meeting didn't start on time. It was delayed." Omar couldn't believe it. He worried for nothing.
MIA	A few minutes later, Omar arrived, and he had a cup of coffee. The meeting went well, and in the end, he had a very good day. And the best part is that, recently, he bought a new alarm clock, so it never happened again.
JAKE	I love that story. Poor Omar, running to the bus stop.
MIA	And lucky Omar, with his coffee.
JAKE	Did you notice our words? Past, ago, recently, and mistake were all in the story.

MIA	That is why we tell stories. When you hear new words inside a story, they are easier to remember.
JAKE	Can you remember what Omar said to his friend about the problem?
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	He said, "I made a mistake, and I was late." Short, honest, and perfect.
JAKE	And now it's time for our last segment, called Your Turn.
MIA	Okay, now it's your turn. I will ask a question, and you will answer in your head, or out loud. Use was, did, or had.
JAKE	Ready. Question one. How was your day yesterday? Start with, "It was."
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	Here's one idea. "It was a quiet day, and I was a little tired."
JAKE	Question two. What did you have for breakfast this morning? Start with, "I had."
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	"I had bread and tea."
JAKE	Question three. Did you go out last night? Answer with, "Yes, I did," or, "No, I didn't."
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	"No, I didn't. I stayed at home and watched a show."
JAKE	Question four. What did you do last weekend? Say two things.
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	"I cleaned my room, and I met a friend."
JAKE	Question five. Where were you two hours ago? Start with, "I was."
YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	"I was at my desk, and I was listening to this podcast."
JAKE	And one last question. Think of the best day you had this year. What did you do?

YOUR TURN	Pause and answer aloud.
MIA	If you answered even a little in English, then you just talked about your past. Congratulations.
JAKE	Before we finish, let's remember the three small words.
MIA	Was and were. Use them to say how you felt, or where you were.
JAKE	Did. Use it for questions and negatives, and then use the simple verb.
MIA	Had. Use it for food, events, and experiences.
JAKE	And remember, you don't need perfect English to talk about yesterday. A small mistake is a sign that you are learning.
MIA	Before we go, here is Today's Small Win. A small win is a very small task that you can finish today, and it makes you feel good.
JAKE	Today's Small Win is this. Write or say three sentences about yesterday. One with was. One with did. And one with had.
MIA	For example, "Yesterday, I was tired. I didn't go out. I had soup for dinner." It only takes a minute.
JAKE	Now, we have a question for you in the comments. What did you do yesterday? Write one sentence, and start with, "Yesterday, I."
MIA	We read the comments, and we love to see your sentences. So please write them, even if you feel shy. You can do it.
JAKE	And remember, you can read the full transcript of this episode on our website, and listen to the audio while you read. The link is in the description, with our free ebooks.
MIA	If this episode helped you today, please give it a like, and share it with a friend who is learning English. And if you haven't subscribed yet, please subscribe to the English Story Podcast, so you can find our next episode.
JAKE	Thank you so much for spending this time with us.
MIA	Keep listening, keep practicing, and remember, your English is already better than it was yesterday.
JAKE	Take care, everyone.
MIA	And Jake, did you practice your guitar yesterday?
JAKE	Yes, I did. For ten minutes. I didn't play well, but I had fun.
MIA	That's all that matters. Goodbye, and see you in the next episode.

Practice Exercises

1. Match the Word

1. past 2. ago 3. recently 4. mistake

A. something that is not correct B. not long ago C. used after a time period to show how long before now D. the time before now

2. Complete the Sentences

1. Yesterday, I _____ tired.
2. _____ you go to the party?
3. I _____ pizza for lunch.
4. She didn't _____ me.
5. We _____ at the park.
6. He _____ to work late.

3. Make It Personal

One new phrase I want to use: _____

My own example sentence: _____

A question I can ask someone: _____

4. Choose the Best Answer

1. You ask about a friend's weekend.
A. How was your weekend? B. How your weekend was?
2. You ask about a past action.
A. Did you go to the shop? B. Did you went to the shop?
3. You say you had no time.
A. I didn't have time. B. I didn't had time.
4. You describe yesterday's weather.
A. It was cold. B. It did cold.

Speaking & Listening Practice

5. Practise Your Answers Aloud

1. Use one phrase from Say It Like This.

2. Give a short answer, then add one detail.

3. Ask a follow-up question.

4. Tell a 20-second personal story using today's language.

5. Repeat one answer again, a little more naturally.

6. Listening Check

1. What did Jake buy at the market? _____
2. What did Mia cook for dinner? _____
3. Where did Jake go on Saturday evening? _____
4. What happened to Omar's meeting? _____

Answer Key & Sample Answers

1. Match the Word

1-D, 2-C, 3-B, 4-A

2. Complete the Sentences

1. was 2. Did 3. had 4. call 5. were 6. had

4. Choose the Best Answer

1-A, 2-A, 3-A, 4-A

6. Listening Check

1. Bread 2. Pasta 3. His friend's house 4. It was delayed

Useful Phrases to Keep

- How was your weekend?
- It was great, thank you.
- What did you do yesterday?
- I had a really busy day.
- I didn't go out last night.