

RULES

For Using Irregular Verbs

Understand the problem.

All verbs, whether regular or irregular, have five forms [often called *principal parts*]. These forms are the infinitive, simple present, simple past, past participle, and present participle.

The difference between a regular and an irregular verb is the formation of the simple past and past participle. Regular verbs are dependably consistent—the simple past ends in *ed* as does the past participle. Check out this chart:

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to laugh	laugh(s)	laughed	laughed	laughing
to start	start(s)	started	started	starting
to wash	wash(es)	washed	washed	washing
to wink	wink(s)	winked	winked	winking

In contrast, the simple past and past participle of irregular verbs can end in a variety of ways, with absolutely no consistent pattern. Here are some examples:

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to drive	drive(s)	drove	driven	driving
to feel	feel(s)	felt	felt	feeling
to put	put(s)	put	put	putting
to swim	swim(s)	swam	swum	swimming

Writers make two frequent errors with irregular verbs. They either add an incorrect *ed* to the end of an irregular verb or accidentally interchange the simple past and past participle. Read this sentence:

Olivia **feeled** like exercising yesterday, so she **putted** on her bathing suit and **drived** to the YMCA, where she **swum** so far that only an extra large pepperoni pizza would satisfy her hunger.

What are the problems with this sentence? First, **feeled** should be **felt**. Next, **putted** needs to be **put**. The correct past tense of **drive** is **drove**. And we must change **swum** to **swam**.

Know the solution.

To avoid making mistakes with irregular verbs, learn the very long chart below.

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to arise	arise(s)	arose	arisen	arising
to awake	awake(s)	awoke or awaked	awaked or awoken	awaking
to be	am, is, are	was, were	been	being
to bear	bear(s)	bore	borne or born	bearing
to beat	beat(s)	beat	beaten	beating
to become	become(s)	became	become	becoming
to begin	begin(s)	began	begun	beginning
to bend	bend(s)	bent	bent	bending
to bet	bet(s)	bet	bet	betting
to bid [<i>to offer</i>]	bid(s)	bid	bid	bidding

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to bid [<i>to command</i>]	bid(s)	bade	bidden	bidding
to bind	bind(s)	bound	bound	binding
to bite	bite(s)	bit	bitten <i>or</i> bit	biting
to blow	blow(s)	blew	blown	blowing
to break	break(s)	broke	broken	breaking
to bring	bring(s)	brought	brought	bringing
to build	build(s)	built	built	building
to burst	burst(s)	burst	burst	bursting
to buy	buy(s)	bought	bought	buying
to cast	cast(s)	cast	cast	casting
to catch	catch(es)	caught	caught	catching
to choose	choose(s)	chose	chosen	choosing
to cling	cling(s)	clung	clung	clinging
to come	come(s)	came	come	coming
to cost	cost(s)	cost	cost	costing
to creep	creep(s)	crept	crept	creeping
to cut	cut(s)	cut	cut	cutting

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to deal	deal(s)	dealt	dealt	dealing
to dig	dig(s)	dug	dug	digging
to dive	dive(s)	dived <i>or</i> dove	dived	diving
to do	do(es)	did	done	doing
to draw	draw(s)	drew	drawn	drawing
to dream	dream(s)	dreamed <i>or</i> dreamt	dreamed <i>or</i> dreamt	dreaming
to drink	drink(s)	drank	drunk	drinking
to drive	drive(s)	drove	driven	driving
to eat	eat(s)	ate	eaten	eating
to fall	fall(s)	fell	fallen	falling
to feed	feed(s)	fed	fed	feeding
to feel	feel(s)	felt	felt	feeling
to fight	fight(s)	fought	fought	fighting
to find	find(s)	found	found	finding
to flee	flee(s)	fled	fled	fleeing
to fling	fling(s)	flung	flung	flinging
to fly	flies, fly	flew	flown	flying

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to forbid	forbid(s)	forbade <i>or</i> forbad	forbidden	forbidding
to forget	forget(s)	forgot	forgotten <i>or</i> forgot	forgetting
to forgive	forgive(s)	forgave	forgiven	forgiving
to forsake	forsake(s)	forsook	forsaken	forsaking
to freeze	freeze(s)	froze	frozen	freezing
to get	get(s)	got	got <i>or</i> gotten	getting
to give	give(s)	gave	given	giving
to go	go(es)	went	gone	going
to grow	grow(s)	grew	grown	growing
to hang [<i>to suspend</i>]	hang(s)	hung	hung	hanging
to have	has, have	had	had	having
to hear	hear(s)	heard	heard	hearing
to hide	hide(s)	hid	hidden	hiding
to hit	hit(s)	hit	hit	hitting
to hurt	hurt(s)	hurt	hurt	hurting

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to keep	keep(s)	kept	kept	keeping
to know	know(s)	knew	known	knowing
to lay	lay(s)	laid	laid	laying
to lead	lead(s)	led	led	leading
to leap	leap(s)	leaped <i>or</i> leapt	leaped <i>or</i> leapt	leaping
to leave	leave(s)	left	left	leaving
to lend	lend(s)	lent	lent	lending
to let	let(s)	let	let	letting
to lie [to rest or recline]	lie(s)	lay	lain	lying
to light	light(s)	lighted <i>or</i> lit	lighted <i>or</i> lit	lighting
to lose	lose(s)	lost	lost	losing
to make	make(s)	made	made	making
to mean	mean(s)	meant	meant	meaning
to pay	pay(s)	paid	paid	paying
to prove	prove(s)	proved	proved <i>or</i> proven	proving
to quit	quit(s)	quit	quit	quitting

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to read	read(s)	read	read	reading
to rid	rid(s)	rid	rid	ridding
to ride	ride(s)	rode	ridden	riding
to ring	ring(s)	rang	rung	ringing
to rise	rise(s)	rose	risen	rising
to run	run(s)	ran	run	running
to say	say(s)	said	said	saying
to see	see(s)	saw	seen	seeing
to seek	seek(s)	sought	sought	seeking
to send	send(s)	sent	sent	sending
to set	set(s)	set	set	setting
to shake	shake(s)	shook	shaken	shaking
to shine <i>[to glow]</i>	shine(s)	shone	shone	shining
to shoot	shoot(s)	shot	shot	shooting
to show	show(s)	showed	shown <i>or</i> showed	showing
to shrink	shrink(s)	shrank	shrunk	shrinking
to sing	sing(s)	sang	sung	singing

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to sink	sink(s)	sank <i>or</i> sunk	sunk	sinking
to sit	sit(s)	sat	sat	sitting
to slay	slay(s)	slew	slain	slaying
to sleep	sleep(s)	slept	slept	sleeping
to sling	sling(s)	slung	slung	slinging
to sneak	sneak(s)	sneaked <i>or</i> snuck	sneaked <i>or</i> snuck	sneaking
to speak	speak(s)	spoke	spoken	speaking
to spend	spend(s)	spent	spent	spending
to spin	spin(s)	spun	spun	spinning
to spring	spring(s)	sprang <i>or</i> sprung	sprung	springing
to stand	stand(s)	stood	stood	standing
to steal	steal(s)	stole	stolen	stealing
to sting	sting(s)	stung	stung	stinging
to stink	stink(s)	stank <i>or</i> stunk	stunk	stinking
to stride	stride(s)	strode	stridden	striding
to strike	strike(s)	struck	struck	striking

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to strive	strive(s)	strove	striven	striving
to swear	swear(s)	swore	sworn	swearing
to sweep	sweep(s)	swept	swept	sweeping
to swim	swim(s)	swam	swum	swimming
to swing	swing(s)	swung	swung	swinging
to take	take(s)	took	taken	taking
to teach	teach(es)	taught	taught	teaching
to tear	tear(s)	tore	torn	tearing
to tell	tell(s)	told	told	telling
to think	think(s)	thought	thought	thinking
to throw	throw(s)	threw	thrown	throwing
to understand	understand(s)	understood	understood	understanding
to wake	wake(s)	woke <i>or</i> waked	waked <i>or</i> woken	waking
to wear	wear(s)	wore	worn	wearing
to weave	weave(s)	wove <i>or</i> weaved	woven <i>or</i> wove	weaving
to weep	weep(s)	wept	wept	weeping
to wring	wring(s)	wrung	wrung	wringing

Infinitive	Simple Present	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to write	write(s)	wrote	written	writing

In addition to learning the chart above, you must also understand the difference between the simple past and past participle.

A simple past tense verb always has *just one part*. You need no auxiliary verb to form this tense. Look at these examples:

Because dinner time was near, my dog Oreo **bit** the spine of *Moby-Dick* and pulled the novel off my lap.

Since Denise had ignored bills for so long, she **wrote** out checks for an hour straight.

Despite the noise, jolts, and jerks, Alex **slept** so soundly on the city bus that he missed his stop.

Many multipart verbs, however, require the past participle after one or more auxiliary verbs. Read these sentences:

Raymond **had bitten** into the muffin before Charise mentioned that it was her infamous chocolate-broccoli variety.

had = auxiliary verb; **bitten** = past participle

Once Woody **has written** his essay for Mr. Stover, he plans to reward himself with a packet of Twinkies.

has = auxiliary verb; **written** = past participle

Cynthia **might have slept** better if she hadn't watched *The Nightmare on Elm Street* marathon on HBO.

might, have = auxiliary verbs; **slept** = past participle

For regular verbs, knowing the distinction between the simple past and past participle is unnecessary because both are identical. Check out these two sentences:

Diane **giggled** as her beagle Reliable pushed his cold wet nose into her stomach, searching for cookie crumbs.

giggled = simple past

Until the disapproving Mrs. Whitman elbowed Latoya in the ribs, the young girl **had giggled** without stop at the toilet paper streamer attached to Principal Clemens's shoe.

had = auxiliary verb; **giggled** = past participle

When you choose an irregular verb for a sentence, however, the simple past and past participle are often different, so you must know the distinction. Here are two examples:

Essie **drove** so cautiously that traffic piled up behind her, causing angry drivers to honk their horns and shout obscenities.

drove = simple past

Essie **might have driven** faster if she hadn't forgotten her glasses and saw more than big colored blurs through the windshield.

might, have = auxiliary verbs; **driven** = past participle

In addition, past participles can function as adjectives in sentences, describing other words. When you use a past participle in this manner, you must choose the correct form. Read these sentences:

The calculus exams **given** by Dr. Ribley are so difficult that his students believe their brains will burst.

Delores discovered the **stolen** bologna under the sofa, guarded fiercely by Max, her Chihuahua.

The **written** reprimand so shamed poor Pablo that he promised his boss never again to throw a scoop of ice cream at a customer.

Remember that you can always consult a dictionary when you have a question about the correct form of an irregular verb.



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