

“Was” and “were”

STEPHANIE SHELLABEAR presents basic grammar.

This month: using “was” and “were” to talk about the past.

The past simple forms of the verb “be” are **was** and **were**. The past simple is used when talking (or thinking) about a point of time in the past:

singular		plural		
I	was	we	were	• I was ill yesterday.
you	were	you	were	• We were happy to hear from you.
he / she / it	was	they	were	• It was very cold last night.

To make the **negative** form, “not” is added. When speaking, the short form is used:

singular		plural	
I	was not (wasn't)	we	were not (weren't)
you	were not (weren't)	you	were not (weren't)
he / she / it	was not (wasn't)	they	were not (weren't)

- The boys weren't at school last week.
- The meal wasn't good.
- I wasn't late for the meeting yesterday.

To form a **question**, the verb needs to be placed at the beginning of the sentence:

singular		plural		
Was I...?		Were we...?		• Were you there?
Were you...?		Were you...?		• Was Marion happy?
Was he / she / it...?		Were they...?		• Were your parents at home?

Underline the correct verb form in the following sentences.

- This book **wasn't** / **weren't** very interesting.
- Was** / **Were** your friends at the party?
- My last job **was** / **were** in Scotland.
- We **was** / **were** in New Zealand last summer.
- No, it **wasn't** / **weren't** my idea.

When somebody asks you a question, a short answer is often given:

- Were you at home all day?
— Yes, we were. /
— No, we weren't.
- Was the film good?
— Yes, it was. / No, it wasn't.

Tips

Answers
a) wasn't; b) Were; c) was;
d) were; e) wasn't

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What's new?

Andrew comes home from work to find Donna in the kitchen.

By **DAGMAR TAYLOR**

Donna: Hello, love! Did you have a good day at work?

Andrew: **Not bad. How about you?**

Donna: Fine, thanks. I spoke to **both of** our children — so that was nice.

Andrew: Did you call them, or did they call you?

Donna: Well, I called Paula, and about five minutes later, Stephen called me.

Andrew: And? Are they both OK? Any **news?**

Donna: Yes. Stephen got that job he applied for.

Andrew: Oh, **brilliant!** Is he happy?

Donna: Yes. He certainly **sounded pleased**. And Paula is engaged!

Andrew: Oh! To Matt?

Donna: Yes, of course to Matt.

Andrew: Well, good! When's the wedding, then?

Tips

- If someone asks you how you are or how your day was, you can say: **not bad** (*ifml.*), which means “quite good”.
- It's polite (*höflich*) to ask the other person how he or she is as well. You can say: **How about you?**
- **Both of** is used with plural nouns and means “the two of”. It is also possible to leave out “of” and say: “I spoke to both our children.”
- Fresh information about something that has happened recently is **news**. Remember that “news” is uncountable (*unzählbar*). Don't say: “~~That's a good news~~”, but instead: “That's good news!”
- Another way of saying “very good” is **brilliant** (*UK ifml.*).
- If you **sound pleased**, it's possible to tell from your voice (*Stimme*) that you are happy about something.

Underline the correct word to complete the sentences below.

- Did you have a good day **at** / **in** work?
- Donna spoke **to** / **with** both of her children.
- Stephen applied **for** / **to** a job.
- Paula is engaged **to** / **with** Matt.



Listen to the dialogue at www.spotlight-online.de/products/green-light

apply for sth. [ə'plai fə] sich um etw. bewerben

engaged [ɪn'geɪdʒd] verlobt

wedding ['wedɪŋ] Hochzeit

Answers: a) at; b) to; c) for; d) to

Donna

Andrew

