

# Using 'was' and 'were'

An informative PowerPoint  
about the use of the past tense of the verb 'to be'



# ‘was’ and ‘were’ are the past tenses of the verb ‘to be’.

It is important to be careful when choosing the correct form of the verb for the subject of a sentence.



# In the singular past form, the correct use of 'was' and 'were' is:

**I was**      I was happy living there.

**You were**      You were always so kind to me.

**He was**      He was the best runner in the school.

**She was**      She was the first woman in space.

**It was**      It was unusual to see Emily crying.

# In the plural past form, the correct use of 'was' and 'were' is:

**We were** We were all poorly last week.

**You were** You were brilliant, Class 4!

**They were** They were stuck on the bus for hours.



**\*NOT\*** They was stuck on the bus for hours.

# 'was' or 'were'?

## Singular

I was  
You were  
He was  
She was  
It was

## Plural

We were  
You were  
They were

# Watch out for...

‘**were**’ used in the **past subjunctive**.

Sometimes you might see ‘I were’ and ‘he were’ instead of ‘I was’, ‘he was’, ‘it was’ etc. This form of the verb is used to show **fantasy** or **hypothetical situations** which are unlikely to happen.

For example:

1. If **I were** more confident, I would be an actor.
2. I wish **she weren’t** so lazy!
3. If only **it were** the holidays already!
4. He behaves as if **he were** the most important.

# Top Tip!

In formal British English, the presence of the words **'if'** and **'wish'** are a clue that the past subjunctive form of the verb (I were, he were) should be used.

