

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.

‘was’ or ‘were’ Quiz



Which is the correct use of 'was'?

a) We was good at sport.

b) She was kind.

c) They was a great class.

d) I wish I wasn't lazy.

Which is the correct use of 'were'?

a) She were hungry.

b) I were late for school.

c) He were unhappy.

d) I wish I were queen.

'was' or 'were'?

a) When he got home he was very tired.

b) I wish I were fitter!

c) They were the best of friends.

d) He was a successful chef.

