Did, was and were in past questions

La diferencia básica

Para elegir entre **did** y **was/were**, primero tenemos que mirar qué verbo necesitamos en la pregunta.

Usamos did con la mayoría de los verbos

Si el verbo principal es:

- go
- eat
- work
- study
- see
- buy
- call
- speak
- travel
- like
- want
- have
- know
- etc.

normalmente usamos:

Did + subject + base verb

Examples:

- Did you **go** out yesterday?
- Did she **call** you?
- Did they **like** the restaurant?
- Where did you **stay**?
- What did he **buy**?
- Who did you **speak to**?

Importante: después de did, usamos la forma base

Did ya marca el pasado.

Correct:

- Did you **go**?
- Did she **see** him?
- Did they **have** dinner?

Incorrect:

- Did you **went**?
- Did she **saw** him?
- Did they **had** dinner?

Usamos was/were cuando el verbo es be

En pasado:

Subject	Be
I	was
he	was
she	was
it	was
you	were
we	were
they	were

Examples:

- I was tired.
- She was at home.
- You were late.
- They were happy.

Para hacer una pregunta, simplemente cambiamos el orden:

Was/Were + subject...?

- Were you tired?
- Was she at home?
- Were they happy?
- Was the restaurant expensive?

No necesitamos **did**.

Correct:

- Were you tired?
- Was she angry?

Incorrect:

- Did you be tired?
- Did she be angry?

Was/were + adjective

Muchas veces usamos **be** para describir cómo era alguien o algo. Aquí no hay otro verbo. **Was/were es el verbo principal.**

Examples:

- She was tired.
- He was angry.
- The film was interesting.
- The food was expensive.
- They were nervous.

Questions:

- Was she tired?
- Why was he angry?
- Was the film interesting?
- Was the food expensive?
- Were they nervous?

Was/were + place

También usamos **be** para hablar de dónde estaba alguien o algo.

Examples:

- I was at home.
- She was in Madrid.
- They were at the party.
- My phone was on the table.

Questions:

- Were you at home?
- Where was she?
- Were they at the party?
- Where was your phone?

Compare:

Where were you?
= ¿Dónde estabas?

Where did you go?
= ¿Adónde fuiste?

En la primera pregunta el verbo es **be**.

En la segunda el verbo es **go**, por eso necesitamos **did**.

Was/were + noun

También podemos usar **be** para identificar o describir a una persona o cosa.

Examples:

- He was my teacher.
- She was the manager.
- It was a good experience.
- They were my neighbours.

Questions:

- Was he your teacher?
- Who was the manager?
- Was it a good experience?
- Were they your neighbours?

“When was the last time you...?”

Esta estructura puede parecer confusa:

When was the last time you went to the cinema?

¿Por qué usamos **was** si también tenemos **went**?

Porque en realidad hay dos partes:

When was the last time + **you went to the cinema?**

La pregunta principal habla de **the last time**.

Podemos imaginar la respuesta:

The last time was on Saturday.

Por eso utilizamos **was**.

La segunda parte:

you went to the cinema

nos dice qué ocurrió en ese momento.

Direct question

When did you go to the cinema?

Aquí preguntamos directamente por la acción **go**.

Por eso:

did + go

Asking about “the last time”

When was the last time you went to the cinema?

Aquí preguntamos:

When was the last time...?

Por eso utilizamos **was**.

More examples:

- When was the last time you travelled abroad?
- When was the last time you saw your family?
- When was the last time you ate sushi?
- When was the last time you went to a concert?
- When was the last time you spoke English outside class?

Notice that after **the last time**, the verb itself is normally in the past:

- the last time you **went**
- the last time you **saw**
- the last time you **ate**
- the last time you **spoke**

We do NOT say:

- When was the last time you did go to the cinema?

“The last time I... was...”

Encontramos la misma estructura en frases afirmativas.

The last time I went to the cinema was last Saturday.

We have:

The last time I went to the cinema = subject

was = verb

last Saturday = information about that time

More examples:

- The last time I saw him was two weeks ago.
- The last time we travelled together was in 2024.
- The last time she called me was yesterday.
- The last time they visited Spain was in July.

Aunque aparece un verbo como **went, saw, travelled** o **called**, toda la primera parte funciona como información sobre **the last time**.

Compare:

I went to the cinema on Saturday.

→ When **did** you go to the cinema?

But:

The last time I went to the cinema was Saturday.

→ When **was** the last time you went to the cinema?

“What was the first/last/best/worst time...?”

Esta estructura aparece también con otras expresiones.

- When was the first time you travelled alone?
- What was the best holiday you had as a child?
- What was the worst job you ever had?
- When was the first time you met her?
- What was the last film you watched?

Hay que fijarse en cuál es la estructura principal de la pregunta.

For example:

What was the last film you watched?

The subject is:

the last film you watched

and we are asking what it **was**.

But:

What did you watch last night?

Here the main action is **watch**, so we use **did**.

Was/were in the past continuous

Was y **were** también funcionan como auxiliares para formar el **past continuous**.

Structure:

was/were + verb-ing

Examples:

- I was working.
- She was sleeping.

- They were eating.

Questions:

- Were you working?
- Was she sleeping?
- Were they eating?

With question words:

- What were you doing?
- Where were they going?
- Who was she talking to?
- Why were you laughing?

Compare:

What did you do yesterday?

This asks about a completed action or actions.

What were you doing at 8 p.m.?

This asks about an action that was in progress at that moment.

Question words + did

With **did**, we often use:

Question word + did + subject + base verb

What

- What did you eat?
- What did she say?

Where

- Where did you go?
- Where did they stay?

When

- When did you arrive?
- When did she leave?

Why

- Why did you call him?
- Why did they cancel the meeting?

How

- How did you travel there?
- How did she know?

Who + object

- Who did you call?
- Who did she speak to?
- Who did you go with?

Question words + was/were

Structure:

Question word + was/were + subject

Examples:

- Where were you?
- Why was she angry?
- How was the holiday?
- Where were they yesterday?
- What was the problem?
- Who was at the party?

Be careful with who

Who can create two different structures.

Who + was/were

When we ask who someone was or who was somewhere:

- Who was your teacher?
- Who was at the party?
- Who was with you?
- Who were those people?

Who + did

When someone receives an action:

- Who did you call?
- Who did you see?
- Who did she invite?
- Who did they speak to?

Compare:

Who was at the party?

We want to know which people were there.

Who did you see at the party?

We want to know which people you saw.

Questions ending in prepositions

En inglés hablado es completamente normal colocar algunas preposiciones al final de la pregunta.

Examples:

- Who did you go **with**?
- Who did you speak **to**?
- What did you talk **about**?
- What were you worried **about**?
- Who was she angry **with**?
- What was the film **about**?
- Where did this come **from**?

The preposition depends on the expression:

speak to someone

→ Who did you speak **to**?

go with someone

→ Who did you go **with**?

talk about something

→ What did you talk **about**?

be worried about something

→ What were you worried **about**?

be angry with someone

→ Who were you angry **with**?

Compare the questions

Look carefully at how a small change in meaning changes the grammar.

Location vs movement

Where were you last night?
Location.

Where did you go last night?
Movement/action.

State vs action

Were you tired after work?
State.

Did you sleep after work?
Action.

Description vs opinion/action

Was the film good?
Description/opinion using **be**.

Did you like the film?
Action/experience using **like**.

Presence vs action

Were you at the party?

Did you go to the party?

Past event vs last occasion

When did you see him?

When was the last time you saw him?

Completed action vs action in progress

What did you do at work yesterday?

What were you doing at 3 p.m.?

Exercise 1 — Did, was or were?

Complete each question.

1. _____ you at home last night?
2. _____ you watch TV last night?
3. Where _____ she yesterday?
4. Where _____ she go yesterday?
5. _____ the restaurant expensive?
6. _____ you enjoy the restaurant?
7. Why _____ they angry?
8. Why _____ they leave?
9. _____ he your teacher last year?
10. _____ he teach you last year?
11. What _____ you do at the weekend?
12. How _____ your weekend?
13. _____ your parents at home?
14. _____ your parents call you?
15. When _____ you see her?
16. When _____ the last time you saw her?
17. What _____ the last film you watched?
18. What _____ you watch last night?
19. _____ you tired after the flight?
20. _____ you sleep on the plane?
21. Where _____ they staying when you called them?
22. What _____ you doing at 10 p.m.?
23. Where _____ this phone made?
24. When _____ these houses built?
25. Who _____ at the meeting?
26. Who _____ you talk to at the meeting?

Exercise 2 — Choose the correct form

Choose the correct option.

1. When **did / was** you go to Italy?
2. When **did / was** the last time you went to Italy?
3. Where **did / were** you last night?
4. Where **did / were** you go last night?
5. **Did / Was** she angry?
6. **Did / Was** she tell you why she was angry?
7. What **did / was** the problem?
8. What **did / was** you do about the problem?
9. Who **did / was** at your house?
10. Who **did / was** you invite to your house?
11. What **did / were** you doing when I called?
12. What **did / were** you do after I called?
13. When **did / was** the building built?
14. Who **did / was** build the building?
15. What **did / was** the last book you read?
16. What **did / was** you read on holiday?

Exercise 3 — Add the auxiliary and preposition

Complete the questions. Some gaps need **did, was or were**. Some also need a preposition.

1. Who _____ you go _____?
2. What _____ you worried _____?
3. Who _____ she speaking _____?
4. What _____ they talk _____?
5. Who _____ he angry _____?
6. Where _____ you yesterday?
7. Where _____ you travel _____ last summer?
8. Who _____ at the restaurant _____ you?
9. What _____ the film _____?
10. Where _____ this gift come _____?
11. Who _____ you buy the present _____?
12. What _____ she looking _____ when you saw her?
13. Who _____ they staying _____?

14. What _____ you interested _____ when you were younger?
15. Who _____ you sit next _____ at dinner?

Exercise 4 — Build the question

Create a complete question. Add all necessary auxiliaries, verbs and prepositions.

1. you / last night / where / be

_____?

2. you / last night / where / go

_____?

3. she / angry / why

_____?

4. she / leave / why

_____?

5. you / last see your best friend / when

_____?

6. last time / see your best friend / when

_____?

7. you / speak / who / party / to

_____?

8. party / who / at

_____?

9. you / worried / what / about

_____?

10. they / talk / what / about

_____?

11. you / do / what / 8 p.m.

_____?

12. you / do / what / yesterday

_____?

13. house / build / when

_____?

14. house / build / who

_____?

15. last restaurant / go to / what

_____?

16. you / go / restaurant / what

_____?

Exercise 5 — Complete the conversation

Add **did, was, were** and any necessary prepositions.

A: Where _____ you on Saturday?

B: I _____ at my friend's house.

A: What _____ you do there?

B: We watched a film.

A: What _____ the film?

B: It _____ called *The Impossible*.

A: _____ it good?

B: Yes, it _____ really good.

A: Who _____ you watch it _____?

B: Two friends from university.

A: When _____ the last time you saw them before Saturday?

B: I think it _____ about three months ago.

A: What _____ you doing when they invited you over?

B: I _____ working.

A: What time _____ you finish work?

B: At about six.

A: How _____ you get to their house?

B: I went by metro.

Exercise 6 — Find and correct the mistake

1. Did you went out yesterday?

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2. Was you tired after work?

---

3. Did she was at home?

---

4. Where did you went?

---

5. Why did he angry?

---

6. When did the last time you travelled abroad?

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7. When was the last time you did travel abroad?

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8. What did the last film you watched?

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9. Who did at the party?

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10. Who were you see at the party?

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11. What did you doing when I called?

---

12. Where did the car made?

---

13. Who did you speak?

---

14. What were you worried?

---

15. Who did you go to the cinema?

Exercise 7 — Same topic, different question

Complete each pair. Think about why one question needs **did** and the other needs **was/were**.

1. Where _____ you yesterday?
   Where _____ you go yesterday?
2. _____ the food good?
   _____ you like the food?
3. Why _____ she upset?
   Why _____ she call you?
4. Who _____ at the meeting?
   Who _____ you meet?
5. When _____ you visit Paris?
   When _____ the last time you visited Paris?
6. What _____ your favourite subject at school?
   What _____ you study at university?
7. _____ they at home?
   _____ they stay at home?
8. What _____ you doing at midnight?
   What _____ you do after midnight?
9. When _____ the bridge built?
   Who _____ they hire to build the bridge?
10. Who _____ she with?
    Who _____ she travel with?

Exercise 8 — Ask the question

Read the answer and create the most natural question.

1. **I was at home last night.**

Question: _____?

2. **I went to my friend's house.**

Question: _____?

3. **I saw Maria two days ago.**

Question: _____?

4. **The last time I saw Maria was two days ago.**

Question: _____?

5. **I was tired because I worked until midnight.**

Question: _____?

6. **I left because I was tired.**

Question: _____?

7. **I was talking to my manager.**

Question: _____?

8. **I spoke to my manager after the meeting.**

Question: _____?

9. **The building was constructed in 1985.**

Question: _____?

10. **My grandfather built the house.**

Question: _____?

Final challenge — Choose everything yourself

Complete the questions with any missing **question words, auxiliaries, verbs or prepositions**.

1. _____ _____ the last time you _____ abroad?
2. _____ _____ you go last summer?
3. _____ _____ you travel _____?
4. _____ _____ your favourite place?
5. _____ _____ you like it so much?
6. _____ _____ you staying there?
7. _____ _____ you doing when you first met your partner?
8. _____ _____ you first meet?
9. _____ _____ you meet _____?
10. _____ _____ the weather like?
11. _____ _____ you do when the weather was bad?
12. _____ _____ the best thing you did on the trip?
13. _____ _____ you spend the most money _____?
14. _____ _____ you worried _____ anything before the trip?
15. _____ _____ the last day of the holiday like?