SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH THE PAST TENSE

English grammar is very difficult and for some children use of different tenses can be very hard. In English, we use different tenses depending on when something is happening. For example:

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| Past tense | Present tense | Future tense |
| ‘I *jumped*’ | ‘I am *jumping*’ | ‘I *will jump*’ |
| Something that has happened | Something happening now | Something that will happen |

Time concepts are also very difficult for children to understand and learn because they are so abstract. Time concepts are linked into understanding tenses as so overall getting to grips with tenses is difficult!

This pack will help you support your child with learning to understand and use the past tense.

A set of verb symbols will be provided with this pack. There are 2 for each verb. The verb without an arrow on top indicates the verb in present tense (happening now) and the verb with the arrow pointing back, indicates the verb in the past tense (something that has happened).

**REGULAR PAST TENSE**

In English, to make grammar even more complicated, we have some verbs that follow the rules of the ‘regular past tense’ and some verbs that are irregular.

To form a regular past tense verb, you add the ending ‘-*ed*’.

For example: *‘clapped’, ‘walked’, ‘jumped’*.

To help your child practice understanding the past tense, use the following strategies:

1. Choose a regular past tense verb from the verb list enclosed. Try to find an opportunity to do this activity with your child – e.g. wash.

Play games with your child that involve you washing things – e.g. wash a toy character, wash some toy animals, wash your child’s hands, wash your child in the bath, wash up plates after dinner.

Whilst you are doing the activity, model the verb to explain what you are doing – e.g. ‘we are *washing*’, ‘you are *washing* the …’

When you have completed the task, model the verb in the past tense, ‘we have *washed* our hands’, ‘we have *washed* teddy’.

Choose different verbs to trial this with.

1. Use sequencing pictures people doing different activities at different stages – ‘he is *painting*’, ‘he *painted* a picture’ (you can create your own if you don’t have any suitable ready-made pictures). Introduce the 2 concepts of ‘now’ and ‘past’. Make labels for each of these. When you have your selection of sequencing pictures, encourage your child to sort these out depending on whether the person is doing in the action (now) or whether the action is completed (past). The adult will need to model the sentences with the appropriate verbs – e.g. ‘she is *brushing* her hair’, ‘she *brushed* her hair’. Try to encourage your child to listen out to whether they hear an ‘ed’ ending as this will help give them a clue as to which pile the picture should go in.
2. Use the regular verb pictures enclosed in this pack in a variety of different games and activities.

The pictures will show a person doing something (in the present). Explain to your child that we are going to talk about what the person in the picture has done when they have finished or, if your child has an awareness of time concepts, what they did yesterday.

Play posting games where you take turns to put pictures in a post box or fishing games, where you attach a paper clip to each picture and then pick up the pictures one by one with a magnetic fishing rod. Other commercial games and activities with parts (e.g. Pop up Dragon, Buckaroo) can also be used where each player picks up a picture and says a sentence before having a go at the game.

Every time you or your child picks up a picture, model the past tense verb in a short sentence – for example ‘the girl *painted* a picture’.

If your child finds this difficult, emphasise the importance of talking about what they have done when they had finished.

Model back and extend your child’s talking – e.g. if your child said ‘the girl *painting*’, you could say, ‘the girl ***painted*** a picture’.

NB. Always make sure your child is secure with using the regular past tense before you move on to working on the irregular past tense.

**IRREGULAR PAST TENSE**

Irregular past tense verbs are more difficult to learn as they are all individual and don’t follow a particular rule. It is very common for young children to go through a stage in their development where they over-generalise the past tense ending ‘ed’ to the end of irregular verbs – e.g. ‘goed’, ‘comed’.

In English, we have a lot of irregular verbs that we use on a regular basis – e.g. ‘went’ is the irregular past tense for ‘go’, so it can often be quite noticeable if children have not yet secured their use of the irregular past tense forms.

Please find enclosed the pictures of a selection of irregular past tense verbs. Explain to your child that there are some verbs that are a bit special and don’t follow the ‘ed’ rule.

1. Talk through each verb in a posting game. You may find your child knows some of the words already. Make a post box from an old cereal or shoe box and post the pictures 1 at a time, whilst you model saying the irregular past tense verb.
2. Use the irregular past tense verb pictures in other games which involve parts. For example, use fishing games, where you attach a paper clip to each picture and then pick up the pictures one by one with a magnetic fishing rod. Model the verb in a sentence each time a player picks up a picture – e.g. ‘the boy *ran* to the house’. Other commercial games and activities with parts (e.g. Pop up Dragon, Buckaroo) can also be used where each player picks up a picture and says a sentence before having a go at the game.

If your child makes errors with these different forms and over-generalises the past tense ending, try to model back the correct version by explaining it’s a special verb that doesn’t follow the normal rule – e.g. child says ‘he *eated* the apple’, the adult could say, ‘he *ate* the apple, it’s one of those words that doesn’t follow the normal rule.

Continue to practice these verbs in a range of different games and activities until your child appears to be more secure.

1. To help your child generalise their developing skills in using the past tense, ensure that you sensitively model back the correct verb forms, in everyday conversation, if they make occasional mistakes in their own talking.

**ACTIVITIES FOR SUPPORTING GENERALISATION OF THE PAST TENSE**

1. When reading with your child, try to talk about what has happened using the pictures. Be sure to model the correct tenses in this situation and model back the regular and irregular past tense forms if they find this difficult.
2. Take photographs of your child doing different everyday activities. Use these pictures with your child by asking your child to talk about what they have done by telling another family member, teacher or a friend.
3. Encourage your child to retell familiar stories that they enjoy from books or TV programmes. Don’t worry about getting your child to read any of the words. If using a stories, allow your child to focus on the pictures and try to encourage them to form 1 sentence for each picture, thinking about what happened in the story. If using TV programmes, try to encourage your child to explain what happened at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the story.
4. When reading books with your child, encourage them to pick out the examples of the regular past tense endings and irregular past tense forms to increase their overall awareness.
5. Use short comprehension tasks within school to encourage your child to identify examples of the past tense. For example:

*Once upon a time, there was a pirate who sailed the seas to find a desert island. The pirate arrived on his ship and leapt on to the beach. He was excited to see what treasure he could find. The pirate walked along the beach and ran into the forest. He climbed up trees and crawled into caves. Eventually, he came to a large wooden chest underneath the shade of a large palm tree. He took a deep breath and opened the chest…*

**PAST TENSE VERBS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Regular past tense – add ‘ed’** | **Irregular past tense – change the word** |
| Bake = baked | Blow = blew |
| Brush = brushed | Buy = bought |
| Clap = clapped | Choose = chose |
| Climb = climbed | Cut = cut |
| Cook = cooked | Dig = dug |
| Crawl = crawled | Draw = drew |
| Cry = cried | Drink = drank |
| Dry = dried | Drive = drove |
| Jump = jumped | Eat = ate |
| Kick = kicked | Fall = fell |
| Knock = knocked | Find = found |
| Lick = licked | Give = gave |
| Look = looked | Go = went |
| Open = opened | Have = had |
| Paddle = paddled | Hit = hit |
| Paint = painted | Lie = Lay |
| Pick = picked | Make = made |
| Play = played | Put = put |
| Pull = pulled | Read = read |
| Push = pushed | Ride = rode |
| Stop = stopped | Run = ran |
| Touch = touched | Sleep = slept |
| Wait = waited | Smell = smelt |
| Walk = walked | Stand = stood |
| Wash = washed | Throw = threw |