

Using 'was' and 'were'

'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.

Singular
I was
you were
he was
she was
it was

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.

Plural
we were
you were
they were

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

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.

Using 'was' and 'were'

Now use the facts from the previous page to answer the questions below.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 'was' or 'were'?

When he got home he _____ very tired.

I wish I _____ fitter!

They _____ the best of friends.

He _____ a successful chef.

Julie knew that she _____ going to be the last in the race.

Noah told his mum he _____ not going to walk the dog.

If I _____ in charge, I'd make the holidays longer!

I _____ really excited about visiting my new class.

We _____ all looking forward to the party.

Using 'was' and 'were' Answers

1. Which is the correct use of 'was'?

b) She was kind.

2. Which is the correct use of 'were'?

d) I wish I were queen.

3. 'was' or 'were'?

When he got home he **was** very tired.

I wish I **were** fitter!

They **were** the best of friends.

He **was** a successful chef.

Julie knew that she **was** going to be the last in the race.

Noah told his mum he **was** not going to walk the dog.

If I **were** in charge, I'd make the holidays longer!

I **was** really excited about visiting my new class.

We **were** all looking forward to the party.