# The た-form: plain past

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The plain past — and the cheapest form in Japanese. If you know the て-form you already know this one: change the last kana and stop.

## The rule: take the て-form and swap the last kana

**Every verb, no exceptions** — て → **た** and で → **だ**. 飲んで → 飲んだ *nonde → nonda*

**If you do not know the て-form yet** — build it first: the five Group 1 patterns are in the table below, Group 2 drops る, Group 3 is した and 来た.

## Group 1: the last kana of the dictionary form decides

| Ends in | Past ending | Example | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| う・つ・る | った | 使う → 使った *tsukau → tsukatta* | used |
| | | 持つ → 持った *motsu → motta* | held |
| | | 作る → 作った *tsukuru → tsukutta* | made |
| む・ぶ・ぬ | んだ | 飲む → 飲んだ *nomu → nonda* | drank |
| | | 遊ぶ → 遊んだ *asobu → asonda* | played |
| | | 死ぬ → 死んだ *shinu → shinda* | died |
| く | いた | 聞く → 聞いた *kiku → kiita* | listened, asked |
| ぐ | いだ | 泳ぐ → 泳いだ *oyogu → oyoida* | swam |
| す | した | 貸す → 貸した *kasu → kashita* | lent |

## Groups 2 and 3 — plus the one exception

| Group | Dictionary form | | Past | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group 1 godan | 行く *iku* | → | 行**った** *itta* | went ← the exception |
| Group 2 ichidan | 開ける *akeru* | → | 開け**た** *aketa* | opened |
| | 起きる *okiru* | → | 起き**た** *okita* | got up |
| Group 3 irregular | する *suru* | → | **した** *shita* | did |
| | 来る *kuru* | → | **来た** *kita* | came *(reading changes)* |

## Use it

**〜たことがあります** have done before — 泳いだことがあります

**〜たあとで** after doing — 飲んだあとで

**〜たほうがいいです** you should — 聞いたほうがいいです

**〜たり〜たりします** do things like — 泳いだり遊んだり

**〜たら** if, once — 起きたら

**plain speech** to friends — 昨日、使った

### Watch out

**Same exception as the て-form.** 行く → 行った, never 行いた.

**"Did not" is a different form.** The negative past is 飲まなかった, built from ない — there is no negative た-form.

### Two things you get free

**Two forms, one rule.** Whatever you learn about て applies here; the pair always matches.

**The polite past.** 飲みました says the same thing — use た with friends and ました with everyone else.


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