

GRAMMAR A2 EINHEIT 11

The grammar in this unit is the simple past tense (*das Präteritum*) of regular and irregular verbs. Although you will have to memorize the forms of the irregular verbs, you don't really have to learn anything new because you already know the endings for both regular and irregular verbs because you know the past tense forms of *haben*, *sein* and the modals. *Das Präteritum* is pretty much reserved for literature, newspapers, and magazines. Generally, the only time you use the simple past tense in speech is with *haben*, *sein*, modal verbs, and maybe *werden*. One nice thing about using verbs in the simple past tense is the fact that you don't have to worry about helping verbs. It is like the present tense ó no helping verbs.

To form the past tense of regular verbs you simply add the past tense endings to the stem of the verb (the infinitive minus the *en* ending). You already know the endings from *haben* (*hatte*) and the modals (e.g., *konnte*). They are *te, test, te, ten, tet, ten*. With the exception of the verbs mentioned above which use the past tense in speech, *das Präteritum* is pretty much limited to the 1st and 3rd persons. You almost never see or hear the *du* or *ihr* forms of these verbs. Below is how it looks.

Wolltest du nicht mitspielen? Warum konntest du mir nicht helfen?
Ich spielte den ganzen Tag Tennis. Wir spielten den ganzen Tag Tennis.
Er spielte den ganzen Tag Tennis. Sie spielten den ganzen Tag Tennis.

Irregular verbs look like *war*. By irregular I don't mean only verbs that are irregular in the present tense like *lesen*. By irregular I mean any verb whose past participle doesn't end in *t* –like *schwimmen* (*geschwommen*). They take the same endings as *war* ó no ending, *st*, no ending, *en, t, en*. Once again, except for the above mentioned exceptions you will seldom come across these verbs in the *du* or *ihr* forms. You must now learn and practice the past tense forms of all the irregular verbs you have had thus far.

kommen kam ist gekommen Er kam nach Mitternacht nach Hause.
essen aß hat gegessen Wir aßen den Fisch.
schlafen schlief hat geschlafen Ich schlief auf dem Fußboden.
gehen ging ist gegangen Sie gingen in der Nacht spazieren.
Gefallen gefiel hat gefallen Das gefiel mir überhaupt nicht.