

IRREGULAR VERBS

This is one of those areas of English that you are expected to master like a native speaker.

Irregular verbs are very important words in English. They are also called “**strong verbs**” because they’ve remained in their original (Old English) form despite the invasions of Romans (i.e. Latin) and Normans (i.e. French). Real survivors they are.

All languages have a vast repertoire of irregular verbs, and you may have noticed that they are among those most frequently used. They are very common words, and it’s most unlikely for any speaker (even small children) to make a mistake.

Traditionally, we learn English irregular verbs by putting together this three forms of the verb:

(1) INFINITIVE: be	+ (2) SIMPLE PAST: was/were	+ (3) PAST PARTICIPLE: been
have	had	had
do	did	done

Richard Vaughan doesn’t approve of this method, because you only learn **form** this way, and you miss **meaning** and **use**. Instead he suggests a clever way of practicing irregular verbs. Simply pick a verb from a list and make a statement with something you didn’t do yesterday/last night...

*‘I **didn’t** fly to Washington.’*

Then make an opposite statement with the same verb: this time use the affirmative

*‘I **flew** to New York.’*

A jolly good pair-work activity indeed!

Of course R Vaughan knows what he’s talking about, but you still need to learn **forms** even though that’s never enough.

In order to help you learn those irregular verbs, they have been clustered together in different groups. Notice how the verbs in each group tend to follow a particular pattern.

If you take a quick look at a list of irregular verbs, you’ll soon realise there are many whose past form (2) is the same as the participle (3). This group amounts for about 50% of all irregular verbs.

SIMPLE PAST (2) = PAST PARTICIPLE (3)
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BRING	BROUGHT	BROUGHT
BUY	BOUGHT	BOUGHT
CATCH	CAUGHT	CAUGHT
DEAL	DEALT	DEALT
FEED	FED	FED
FEEL	FELT	FELT
GET	GOT	GOT
HAVE	HAD	HAD
HANG	HUNG	HUNG

HEAR	HEARD	HEARD
HOLD	HELD	HELD
KEEP	KEPT	KEPT
LAY	LAID	LAID
LEAVE	LEFT	LEFT
LOSE	LOST	LOST
MAKE	MADE	MADE
MEAN	MEANT	MEANT
MEET	MET	MET
PAY	PAID	PAID
READ	READ	READ
SAY	SAID	SAID
SELL	SOLD	SOLD
SEND	SENT	SENT
SHOOT	SHOT	SHOT
SIT	SAT	SAT
SLEEP	SLEPT	SLEPT
SPEND	SPENT	SPENT
STAND	STOOD	STOOD
STICK	STUCK	STUCK
STINK	STUNK	STUNK
STRIKE	STRUCK	STRUCK
TEACH	TAUGHT	TAUGHT
TELL	TOLD	TOLD
THINK	THOUGHT	THOUGHT
WIN	WON	WON

There's another group of very easy verbs which could be included here.
 They share the same form for the three meanings:

INFINITIVE (1)	=	PAST (2)	=	PARTICIPLE (3)
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BROADCAST	BROADCAST	BROADCAST
CAST	CAST	CAST
COST	COST	COST
CUT	CUT	CUT
HIT	HIT	HIT
HURT	HURT	HURT
LET	LET	LET
PUT	PUT	PUT
RID	RID	RID
SET	SET	SET
SHED	SHED	SHED
SHUT	SHUT	SHUT
SPLIT	SPLIT	SPLIT
SPREAD	SPREAD	SPREAD
THRUST	THRUST	THRUST
UPSET	UPSET	UPSET

There are very few verbs with the same form for both infinitive (1) and participle (3), but a different past form (2).

INFINITIVE (1)	=	PARTICIPLE (3)
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COME	CAME	COME
BECOME	BECAME	BECOME
OVERCOME	OVERCAME	OVERCOME
RUN	RAN	RUN

The verbs with past participles (3) ending in “-N” need a closer watch.

Some participles are the result of adding “-n” to the infinitive:

*be – was – **been**.*

Others add “-n” to the simple past form;

*break – **broke** – **broken**.*

And there are others which do not follow either pattern:

*do – did – **done**.*

Which group does ‘BEAT’ – ‘BEAT’ – ‘BEATEN’ fits in?

INFINITIVE (1)	+	“-N”	=	PAST PARTICIPLE (3)
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BE	WAS / WERE	BEEN
BLOW	BLEW	BLOWN
EAT	ATE	EATEN
FALL	FELL	FALLEN
FORBID	FORBAD(E)	FORBIDDEN
GIVE	GAVE	GIVEN
GROW	GREW	GROWN
KNOW	KNEW	KNOWN
SEE	SAW	SEEN
SHAKE	SHOOK	SHAKEN
SHOW	SHOWED	SHOWN
STREW	STREWED	STREWN
SWELL	SWELLED	SWOLLEN
TAKE	TOOK	TAKEN
THROW	THREW	THROWN

SIMPLE PAST (2)	+	“-N”	=	PAST PARTICIPLE (3)
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BITE	BIT	BITTEN
BREAK	BROKE	BROKEN
CHOOSE	CHOSE	CHOSEN
FORGET	FORGOT	FORGOTTEN
FREEZE	FROZE	FROZEN
HIDE	HID	HIDDEN
LIE	LAY	LAIN
SPEAK	SPOKE	SPOKEN
STEAL	STOLE	STOLEN
TREAD	TROD	TRODDEN
SWEAR	SWORE	SWORN
WEAR	WORE	WORN

No pattern!

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PAST PARTICIPLE (3) ends in "-N"

DO	DID	DONE
DRIVE	DROVE	DRIVEN
FLY	FLEW	FLOWN
GO	WENT	GONE
RIDE	RODE	RIDDEN
RISE	ROSE	RISEN
WRITE	WROTE	WRITTEN

The verbs which follow have “-i-“ in the infinitive, “-a-“ in the past, and “-u-“ in the participle. Look.

INFINITIVE (i) = PAST (æ) = PARTICIPLE (u)

BEGIN	BEGAN	BEGUN
DRINK	DRANK	DRUNK
RING	RANG	RUNG
SHRINK	SHRANK	SHRUNK
SING	SANG	SUNG
SINK	SANK	SUNK
SPRING	SPRANG	SPRUNG
SWIM	SWAM	SWUM

There are finally some very common verbs which take regular or irregular forms depending on geographical regions, register, context... Both forms are acceptable, though Americans tend to prefer regular (-ed) forms.

BET	BETTED / BET	BETTED / BET
BURN	BURNED / BURNT	BURNED / BURNT
DREAM	DREAMED / DREAMT	DREAMED / DREAMT
LEAN	LEANED / LEANT	LEANED / LEANT
LEARN	LEARNED / LEARNT	LEARNED / LEARNT
LIGHT	LIGHTED / LIT	LIGHTED / LIT
QUIT	QUITTED / QUIT	QUITTED / QUIT
SMELL	SMEILED / SMELT	SMEILED / SMELT
SPEED	SPEEDED / SPED	SPEEDED / SPED
SPELL	SPELLED / SPELT	SPELLED / SPELT
SPILL	SPILLED / SPILT	SPILL / SPILT
SPOIL	SPOILED / SPOILT	SPOILED / SPOILT

