

Regular and Irregular Verbs

English uses two types of verbs: **regular and irregular**. The difference between these types can be seen when using the simple past and past participle forms of the verbs. (For information about verb tenses, please see the various verb handouts also provided by the Yale GWC.) There are no differences in form between regular and irregular verbs when using the simple present, present participle, and infinitive.

Regular verbs are called such because they are predictable: both the simple past and the past participle forms add **-ed** to the infinitive form of the verb.

Infinitive form	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to want	wanted	wanted	wanting
to close	closed	closed	closing
to believe	believed	believed	believing

Irregular verbs do not use **-ed** and are not predictable. The simple past and past participle forms must simply be learned. If you are unsure what the correct form is, dictionaries will provide these forms under the entry for the infinitive of the verb. The chart below demonstrates the wide variation in how irregular verbs are conjugated:

Infinitive form	Simple Past	Past Participle	Present Participle
to go	went	gone	going
to bring	brought	brought	bringing
to do	did	done	doing
to begin	began	begun	beginning

Exercises: Conjugate the verb in parentheses and circle whether it is regular or irregular.

1. He looked inside the box and _____ that it was empty. (to see) Regular/Irregular
2. I went to work and _____ filing papers. (to start) Regular/Irregular
3. She had _____ a trip to California during vacation. (to take) Regular/Irregular
4. You had _____ me a letter but I never received it (to write) Regular/Irregular
5. They realized how far it was after they had already _____ most of the way. (to walk)
Regular/Irregular
6. We _____ the entire cake before the party was over. (to eat) Regular/Irregular

Sources and Further Reading/Practice:

Adapted from: <http://www.chompchomp.com/handouts/irregularrules01.pdf>

There are many resources online for learning English irregular verbs. A list of the most common irregular verbs, for instance, can be found here: <http://www.esl-lounge.com/reference/grammar-reference-most-common-irregular-verb-list.php>