

Past Tense of Eat: Ate and Eaten

Eat is an irregular verb. Use ate for a finished action in the past. Use eaten after have or has.

Base	eat
Past	ate
Past participle	eaten
3rd person / -ing	eats / eating

Examples

I eat breakfast at seven. — A daily routine in the present uses eat.

Cats eat fish. — A general fact in the present uses eat.

We ate pizza on Friday. — Friday is a finished time, so use ate.

She ate an apple after school. — Ate is the past simple; it does not need have.

I have eaten too much cake. — Have eaten connects the past with now.

The children have already eaten. — After have, use eaten.

Notes

Pronouncing ate In American English, ate sounds like eight, /eɪt/. In British English, it is often /ɛt/, like et. Both are correct. The spelling is always ate.

Eat or have for meals? Eat is correct for food: eat lunch, eat an apple. But for meals, English often uses have: have breakfast, had dinner. In the past, say ate or had; both are natural.

Common mistakes

I eated rice for lunch. → I ate rice for lunch. — Eat is irregular. The past is ate, not eated.

She has ate already. → She has eaten already. — After has, use the past participle eaten, not ate.

Have you ate lunch yet? → Have you eaten lunch yet? — In present perfect questions, use have plus eaten.

Exercises

Choose the right form

1. We ___ dinner at eight last night. (eat / ate / eaten)
2. I have never ___ meat. (ate / eated / eaten)
3. My dog ___ twice a day. (eats / ate / eaten)
4. He ___ all the bread yesterday. (eaten / ate / eat)

Write the missing form

1. Have you ___ lunch yet?
2. Yesterday, I ___ soup for dinner.
3. They ___ at home on Sundays.

Correct the mistake

1. He has ate all the cookies.

Answer key

Choose the right form

1. ate — Last night is finished, so use ate.
2. eaten — Have takes the past participle eaten.
3. eats — A daily routine with my dog (it) uses eats.
4. ate — Yesterday takes the past simple ate. Eaten needs have.

Write the missing form

1. eaten — Have plus the past participle is have eaten.
2. ate — Yesterday takes the past simple ate.
3. eat — A regular habit with they uses eat.

Correct the mistake

1. eaten — After has, use eaten, not ate.