

Past Tense of See: Saw and Seen

See is an irregular verb. Use saw for something you noticed at a finished time in the past. Use seen after have or has, as in I have seen it.

Base	see
Past	saw
Past participle	seen
3rd person / -ing	sees / seeing

Examples

I see my friends every weekend. — A regular habit in the present uses see.

Can you see the bird in that tree? — After can, the verb stays in its base form.

We saw a good film last night. — Last night is finished, so use saw.

She saw her teacher at the shop. — Saw is one finished event; it needs no helper.

I have seen this film before. — Have plus seen talks about an experience in your life.

Have you seen my keys? — In a question, seen still comes after have.

Notes

See, look and watch See is what your eyes notice, often without trying. Look at means you point your eyes on purpose, and watch is for things that move, such as a film or a match.

Other meanings I see can mean I understand. See you later is a friendly way to say goodbye, and see a doctor means visit one.

Common mistakes

I seen him yesterday. → I saw him yesterday. — Seen needs have or has. For a finished past time, use saw.

She has saw the film. → She has seen the film. — After has, use the past participle seen, not saw.

We seed a rainbow. → We saw a rainbow. — See is irregular, so the past is saw. There is no regular -ed form.

Exercises

Choose the right form

1. Yesterday I ___ a big dog in the park. (see / saw / seen)
2. Have you ___ my brother today? (saw / see / seen)
3. I ___ my grandmother every Sunday. (see / saw / seen)
4. We have never ___ snow. (saw / seen / see)

Write the missing form

1. She ___ her friend at the bus stop this morning.
2. They have ___ that film three times.
3. I can ___ the sea from my window.

Correct the mistake

1. We seen a rainbow yesterday.

Answer key

Choose the right form

1. saw — Yesterday is finished, so use the past form saw.
2. seen — Have takes the past participle seen.
3. see — Every Sunday is a present habit: I see.
4. seen — Have never plus the participle seen.

Write the missing form

1. saw — This morning is finished, so use saw.
2. seen — Have plus the participle is have seen.
3. see — After can, use the base form see.

Correct the mistake

1. saw — With yesterday and no have, use saw.