

5.5 Grammar

Past Simple: was/were, could

I can talk about the past with the verbs be and can.

- 1 In pairs, look at the photo in text A and answer the questions. Then read text A and check.

- Who is the person in the photo?
- What do you know about him?
- What is he most famous for?

THE STARS AND SCHOOL

A **JOHNNY DEPP** is a famous film star now, but what was he like at school? Was he a good student? School wasn't a good experience for Johnny. The problem was that he was at over twenty different schools and often the students weren't very friendly. So school was often a lonely place for Johnny. His two favourite things were music and acting. He couldn't play the piano, but he could play the guitar. He could also sing very well and he was in a band called The Kids. His dream was to be a musician after school. His band was successful, but they couldn't get a record deal. Luckily, Johnny was also a great actor.



B **KRISTEN STEWART** is a famous actress. But when she was / were younger, things wasn't / weren't always easy. She wasn't / weren't happy at high school because she couldn't / couldn't talk to other kids her age. They was / were interested in different things and so they wasn't / weren't very friendly to her. They were / weren't often jealous because Kristen could / couldn't act really well.



C **ALBERT EINSTEIN** was a very famous scientist. From an early age, he was good at Maths and Science and he played the violin well. But at school, he was good at all subjects. History and Geography was easy for him and he was good at foreign languages. But Einstein was a genius and scientists are still studying his brain to help them understand about intelligence.



- 2 Read GRAMMAR FOCUS 1 and 2 and complete the examples with the verbs in blue in text A. Then find more examples in the text.

GRAMMAR FOCUS 1

Past Simple: be

- + I/He/She **was** a good student.
You/We/They **_____** good students.
- I/He/She **_____** a good student.
You/We/They **_____** good students.
- _____** I/he/she a good student?
- Yes, I/he/she **was**./No, I/he/she **wasn't**.
- Were** you/we/they good students?
Yes, you/we/they **were**./No, you/we/they **weren't**.
- What **was** he good at?
What **were** they good at?

Note:

- You also use was/wasn't with it: *It was lonely for him.*
- wasn't = was not, weren't = were not

GRAMMAR FOCUS 2

Past Simple: can

- + He **could** play the guitar.
- He **_____** play the piano.
- ? **Could** he play the piano?

Note:

- Could is the same for all persons (I, you, he, she, it, we, they).
- couldn't = could not

- 3 Read text A again and correct the sentences.

- School was fun for Johnny.
School wasn't fun for Johnny. It wasn't a good experience.
- The other students were always nice.
- Johnny was always happy.
- Johnny's favourite things were Maths and History.
- Johnny couldn't sing well.
- The band wasn't very successful.

- 4 **CD+2.38 MP3-94** Read text B and choose the correct options. Then listen and check.

- 5 **CD+2.39 MP3-95** In pairs, complete text C with was/wasn't, were/weren't or could/couldn't. Then listen and check.

- 6 Complete the questions with was, were or could. Then ask and answer in pairs. Write down the answers.

When you were at primary school:

- were** the other students friendly?
- _____** your teacher nice?
- _____** you speak English?
- _____** you good at Science?
- _____** you understand everything?
- _____** you quiet or noisy?
- _____** school fun?
- _____** you good at sports?

- 7 Tell the class about your partner.

When Ricardo was at primary school, the other students were friendly. His teacher was ...