

# Practice Past Tense Verbs: Job-hunting

This exercise tests your knowledge of regular and irregular past tense verbs with a story about hunting for a job. Fill in the blanks (gaps) using the correct past tense form of the verb given right after each blank.

(It will tell you if you need a past participle rather than the simple past tense. You can also recognize that for yourself by noting if the verb is preceded by have, has or had. In fact, one purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate the use of the past perfect tense when talking about things that happened **before** other past events.)

The first paragraph of the gap-fill is completed as an example.

Before starting, here is a list of forms and meanings of verbs related to employment. Except for 'quit', these are actions an employer (the company or person who has jobs available) takes that affect a person who wants or has a job (the job seeker or employee.) An employee quits when he or she decides to leave a job.

verb	meaning	past tense	past participle (pp)
hire	to give a job to someone	hired	hired
employ	formal term for giving someone a job	employed	employed
lay off	to take away a job due to lack of work	laid off	laid off
let go	to take away a job (various reasons)	let go	let go
fire	to take away a job due to misbehavior, (or for any reason the employer is unhappy with the employee's work)	fired	fired
dismiss	formal term for firing someone	dismissed	dismissed
quit	to leave a job (various reasons)	quit	quit

**The first three sentences have been done as an example.** Underlined words are the answers; words in parentheses give the base form (present tense) of the needed verb and say 'pp.' if the gap should be filled with the past participle form of that verb.

Instructions: fill in each blank/gap with the past tense form of the verb in parentheses (or its past participle if it says pp.)

## Job Hunting

Last June, Henry, Jim, Elena, and Sue were (be, plural) all looking for work. Henry, a mechanic, had been laid (pp. of lay) off when his company downsized. Jim had quit (pp. quit) his job to take a dream vacation in Europe.

Elena had just graduated from college with a B.A. degree in accounting. Sue had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. be) a receptionist. She \_\_\_\_\_ (be) fired for missing too much work. They all \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) their friends if they \_\_\_\_\_ (know) about any jobs.

One friend \_\_\_\_\_ (say), "Try the classified ads in the newspaper for local jobs." Another \_\_\_\_\_ (tell) them to talk to the job counselors at the One Stop Employment Center. A third friend \_\_\_\_\_ (say) she had \_\_\_\_\_ (hear) about a new company in town with many job openings. "I \_\_\_\_\_ (find) out they're hiring mechanics, drivers, delivery people, and office personnel," she said. So all four of them \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to that company and \_\_\_\_\_ (fill) out applications. They also \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) copies of the resumes they had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. write).

They \_\_\_\_\_ (be, plural) all called to come in for interviews two weeks later. They \_\_\_\_\_ (arrive) early, and \_\_\_\_\_ (wear) their best work clothes. The interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ (be, singular) friendly, but she \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) a lot of questions. She asked them all when they would be available to start working. She asked if they \_\_\_\_\_ (want) to work part time or full time, if they could sometimes work weekends, and if they could give her references.

She also asked Henry his reason for leaving his job. When he \_\_\_\_\_ (explain) that he had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. lose) his job due to downsizing, she \_\_\_\_\_ (understand) it wasn't his fault. Then she asked if he had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. operate) heavy equipment, and what kinds of machines and vehicles he had worked on. She also wondered if he had (have) any training in heavy machinery maintenance.

She asked Jim why he had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. leave) his previous job, and how long he \_\_\_\_\_ (expect) to stay with her company. \_\_\_\_\_ (do) he consider this a permanent career, or another temporary job?

She wanted to know what kinds of work Elena had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. do) on her summer vacations, and if she had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. take) any special accounting exams. She also wanted to know if Elena had any general office skills like typing or shorthand.

She asked Sue why she had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. be) absent so often. Sue explained that her daughter had \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. be) sick a lot the past year, and she hadn't \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. find) anyone to take care of her when she \_\_\_\_\_ (have) to stay home. Her previous employer \_\_\_\_\_ (have) not \_\_\_\_\_ (pp. have) anyone to take her place in the office, so they had to let her go. She told the interviewer, "Now my mother is living with me, so she can care for Jessica if she gets sick. I won't miss any more work," she \_\_\_\_\_ (promise).

The next week Henry, Elena, and Sue \_\_\_\_\_ (tell) all their friends that they had been (pp. be) hired! Jim \_\_\_\_\_ (do) not get offered a job. He \_\_\_\_\_ (have) to keep looking for a long time, because no employer \_\_\_\_\_ (think) of him as dependable or hardworking.

## Answers

Last June, Henry, Jim, Elena, and Sue were (be, plural) all looking for work. Henry, a mechanic, had been laid (pp. of lay) off when his company downsized. Jim had quit (pp. quit) his job to take a dream vacation in Europe.

Elena had just graduated from college with a B.A. degree in accounting. Sue had been (pp. be) a receptionist. She was (be) fired for missing too much work. They all asked (ask) their friends if they knew (know) about any jobs.

One friend said (say), "Try the classified ads in the newspaper for local jobs." Another told (tell) them to talk to the job counselors at the One Stop Employment Center. A third friend said (say) she had heard (hear) about a new company in town with many job openings. "I found (find) out they're hiring mechanics, drivers, delivery people, and office personnel," she said. So all four of them went (go) to that company and filled (fill) out applications. They also left (leave) copies of the resumes they had written (pp. write).

They were (be, plural) all called to come in for interviews two weeks later. They arrived (arrive) early, and wore (wear) their best work clothes. The interviewer was (be, singular) friendly, but she asked (ask) a lot of questions. She asked them all when they would be available to start working. She asked if they wanted (want) to work part time or full time, if they could sometimes work weekends, and if they could give her references.

She also asked Henry his reason for leaving his job. When he explained (explain) that he had lost (pp. lose) his job due to downsizing, she understood (understand) it wasn't his fault. Then she asked if he had operated (pp. operate) heavy equipment, and what kinds of machines and vehicles he had worked on. She also wondered if he had (have) any training in heavy machinery maintenance.

She asked Jim why he had left (pp. leave) his previous job, and how long he expected (expect) to stay with her company. Did (do) he consider this a permanent career, or another temporary job?

She wanted to know what kinds of work Elena had done (pp. do) on her summer vacations, and if she had taken (pp. take) any special accounting exams. She also wanted to know if Elena had any general office skills like typing or shorthand.

She asked Sue why she had been (pp. be) absent so often. Sue explained that her daughter had been (pp. be) sick a lot the past year, and she hadn't found (pp. find) anyone to take care of her when she had (have) to stay home. Her previous employer had (have) not had (pp. have) anyone to take her place in the office, so they had to let her go. She told the interviewer, "Now my mother is living with me, so she can care for Jessica if she gets sick. I won't miss any more work," she promised (promise).

The next week Henry, Elena, and Sue told (tell) all their friends that they had been (pp. be) hired! Jim did (do) not get offered a job. He had (have) to keep looking for a long time, because no employer thought (think) of him as dependable or hardworking.