

Activity Type

Grammar and Writing Exercises: gap-fill, writing answers from prompts, binary choice, writing an email

Focus

Verb *to be*

is, am, are

was, were

Aim

To practice the past and present simple of the verb *to be*.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Pre-intermediate (A2)

Time

30 minutes

Introduction

This verb *to be* worksheet helps students to practice the past and present simple of the verb *to be*: *am, are, is, was* and *were* as well as their negative forms.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

Students begin with a present simple verb *to be* gap-fill exercise where they complete sentences with *am, is, are, isn't* or *aren't*. Each word is used twice in the text.

Exercise A - Answer key

- | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|----------|--------|-----------|
| 1. are | 3. is | 5. is | 7. am | 9. aren't |
| 2. aren't | 4. isn't | 6. isn't | 8. are | 10. am |

Students then do a past simple verb *to be* gap-fill exercise where they complete sentences with *was, were, wasn't* or *weren't*. Each word is used twice in the text.

Exercise B - Answer key

- | | | | |
|---------|------------|---------|------------|
| 1. were | 3. wasn't | 5. was | 7. wasn't |
| 2. was | 4. weren't | 6. were | 8. weren't |

Students then move on to answer yes/no comprehension questions about the two texts using the verb *to be*.

Exercise C - Answer key

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. No, they aren't. | 4. No, he isn't. | 7. No, she wasn't. |
| 2. Yes, she is. | 5. Yes, they are. | 8. No, they weren't. |
| 3. Yes, he is. | 6. Yes, she was. | |

Next, students complete another text with the correct form of the verb *to be* in brackets to practice both past and present verb *to be* forms.

Exercise D - Answer key

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|------------|-----------|
| 1. were | 5. were | 9. is | 13. isn't |
| 2. isn't | 6. was | 10. were | 14. was |
| 3. are | 7. is | 11. wasn't | |
| 4. was | 8. are | 12. is | |

To finish, students imagine that they are Robert and Sally's cousin. The students then write an email to one of them using the verb *to be* forms from the worksheet. When the students have finished, have them read their emails to the class and provide feedback.

A. Complete the gaps with *am, is, are, isn't or aren't*. Each word is used twice.

Robert and Sally (1) brother and sister as well as artists. However, they (2) good at the same kind of art. Sally (3) a painter, but she (4) good at making things with her hands. Her brother Robert (5) a sculptor. He makes things from clay, but he (6) good at painting. I (7) their cousin. We (8) all from Canada, but they (9) in Canada now. I (10) proud to be related to them.



B. Complete the gaps with *was, were, wasn't or weren't*. Each word is used twice.

When Sally and Robert (1) children, their mother Amelia (2) sick for a long time. She (3) able to get out of bed. They (4) able to do much for her. Robert (5) sad. He made a bird out of clay for his mother, and his mother loved it. Robert and his mother (6) happy together in those moments. Sally also wanted to make her mother happy, but she (7) a sculptor. She painted a picture of mountains for her mother. When she showed it to her, they (8) sad any more. The artwork made their mother feel alive again, and she got better.



C. Answer the yes/no questions about the two texts above. Write complete answers.

1. Are Robert and Sally good at the same kind of art?
2. Is Sally an artist?
3. Is Robert good at sculpting things from clay?
4. Is Robert good at painting?
5. Are Robert, Sally and their cousin from Canada?
6. Was Amelia sick for a long time?
7. Was Amelia able to get out of bed?
8. Were Amelia and Sally sad when Sally showed her the picture?

D. Complete the text with the correct form of the verb *to be* in brackets.

These days, Robert and Sally both live in Mexico. In Canada, winters (1)
(was, were) cold. One thing they like about Mexico is that there (2) (isn't, wasn't)
any snow. Sally and Robert (3) (is, are) co-owners of an art shop there. Their
shop (4) (is, was) made famous a few years ago when they (5) (are,
were) both winners of awards for their artwork.

Robert (6) (is, was) married to a Mexican woman, but they got divorced
two years ago. Sally (7) (is, was) married to a Mexican man. They have two
grown children and (8) (is, are) happy together. Robert (9) (is,
are) thinking about returning to Canada. His children from his first marriage (10)
(was, were) in Mexico for a vacation recently, and he misses them.

When Sally wrote to me recently, she (11) (isn't, wasn't) sure if she would
stay in Mexico too. Mexico (12) (is, are) beautiful and warm, but it
(13) (isn't, aren't) home to her. When she wrote the email, she (14)
(is, was) thinking about returning to Canada with her husband.

E. Now, imagine that you are Robert and Sally's cousin. Write an email to one of them. Use *am, are, is, was* and *were* (positive or negative) at least once in your email.

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