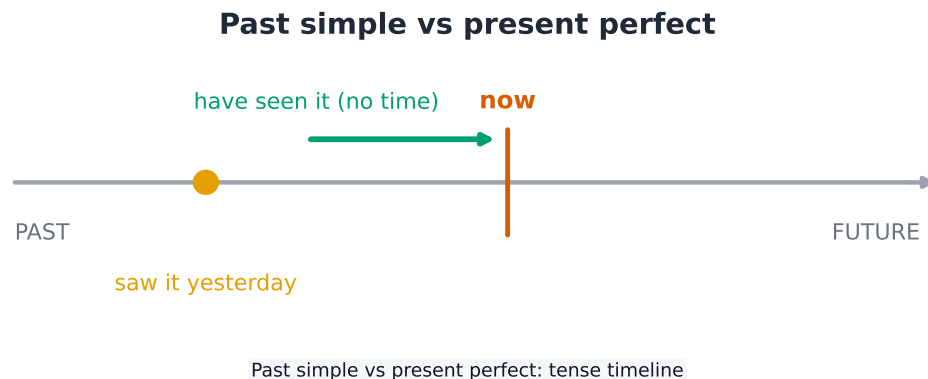


English Grammar · B1

English edition

1 Present perfect vs past simple

1.1 Definite Past vs. Relevance to the Present



Both tenses refer to the past, but they differ based on whether a **specific time** is mentioned and whether there is a connection to the **present**:

- **Past Simple**: The action ended at a **definite time in the past** and has no relevance to the present.
- **Present Perfect**: No specific time is mentioned; it emphasizes the impact on or experience related to the **present**.

I saw him yesterday.

I saw him yesterday. (Definite time → Past Simple)

I have seen that film.

I have seen that movie. (Experience, no specific time mentioned → Present Perfect)

Note: Once definite past time markers such as *yesterday*, *last week*, *in 2019*, or *ago* appear, use the Past Simple, not the Present Perfect.

1.2 Signal Words

Pay attention to these words to help you determine which tense to use:

- **Past Simple**: *yesterday*, *last night*, ... *ago*, *in 2019*, *then*, *when*.
- **Present Perfect**: *just*, *already*, *yet*, *ever*, *never*, *so far*, *recently*, *since*, *for*.

She has just arrived.

She has just arrived. (just → Present Perfect)

They left an hour ago.

They left an hour ago. (ago → Past Simple)

Note: Do not mix them within the same sentence: *~~I have seen him yesterday~~* ×
→ *I saw him yesterday* ✓.

1.3 Been vs. Gone

Both are forms related to *go*, but they have different meanings:

- **Have been to**: Have visited (and returned) — indicates experience.
- **Have gone to**: Have gone (and are still there / on the way).

He has been to Japan.

He has been to Japan. (Visited, and has returned now)

She has gone to the bank.

She has gone to the bank. (Not here now, still over there)

Note: Use **been to** for “have visited somewhere”; use **gone to** for “have gone and haven’t returned yet”.

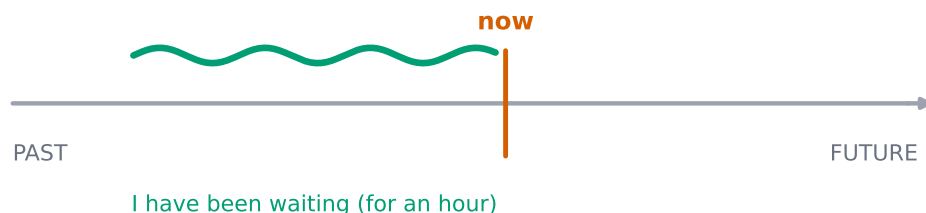
Common Errors

- × *~~When have you arrived?~~* → ✓ **When did** you arrive? — *When* asks for a specific past time, so the Past Simple must be used.
- × *~~I have finished it just now.~~* → ✓ I finished it **just now**. / I have **just** finished it. — *Just now* (a moment ago) pairs with the Past Tense; *just* (very recently) pairs with the Present Perfect.
- × *~~I lost my keys — can you help me look?~~* → ✓ I **have lost** my keys... — The keys have not been found yet, and the effect continues into the present, so the Present Perfect is more accurate.
- × *~~This is the first time I go there.~~* → ✓ This is the first time I **have been** there. — The pattern “the first time / the best time” is fixed with the Present Perfect: the first time / the best film I **have ever seen**.

2 Present perfect continuous

2.1 Structure (have/has + been + V-ing)

Present perfect continuous - duration up to now



Present perfect continuous: duration up to now: tense timeline

The Present Perfect Continuous emphasizes an action that **started in the past and continues up to the present**, and often implies it is still ongoing.

Structure: + have / has + been + -ing

I have been waiting for an hour.

I have been waiting for an hour. (May still be waiting)

It has been raining all day.

It has been raining all day.

Note: Negative form: *haven't / hasn't been + V-ing*. Question form: *Have / Has + subject + been + V-ing?*

2.2 Continuing Until Now

This tense focuses on the **ongoing process** and **duration**, and is frequently used with **for** and **since**:

- **For** + duration: *for two hours*.
- **Since** + starting point: *since this morning*.

She has been studying since nine.

She has been studying since nine o'clock.

Difference from Present Perfect:

- Present Perfect Continuous: Emphasizes the **process** / **duration** (I have been reading —).
- Present Perfect: Emphasizes the **result** / **completion** (I have read it —).

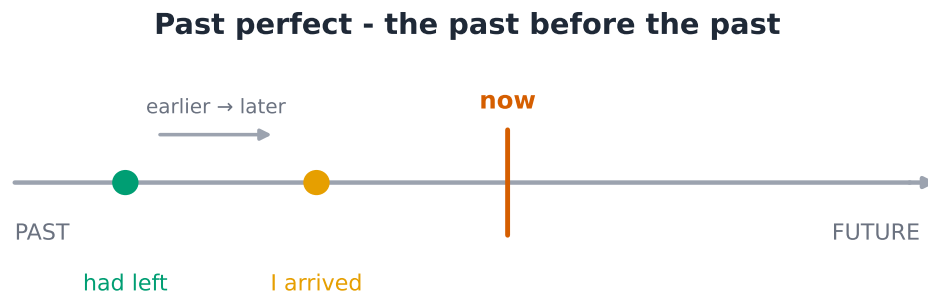
Note: Stative verbs (*know, like, be*) generally **do not** use the continuous form: ~I have been knowing~ × → I have known ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~I am waiting for an hour.~ → ✓ I **have been waiting** for an hour. — To express “waiting for an hour and still waiting,” the Present Perfect Continuous must be used; the Present Continuous cannot indicate how long something has already lasted.
- × ~How long are you living here?~ → ✓ How long **have you been living** here? — *How long* asks about duration, so it pairs with the Perfect (Continuous) tense.
- × ~She has been finished her essay.~ → ✓ She **has finished** her essay. — For active voice, simply use *has/have + past participle* (*has finished*); do not add *been*. *Been* is used in the continuous form (*has been studying*) or passive voice (*Her essay has been finished*, without an object), but never in an active perfect tense with an object.
- × ~I have been reading three books this week.~ → ✓ I **have read** three books this week. — To report a “completed quantity,” use the Present Perfect; the continuous form only emphasizes the process, not the result.

3 Past perfect

3.1 Structure (had + past participle)



The Past Perfect expresses the “past of the past” — an action that was completed **before** a specific point in the past.

Structure: + **had** + (same for all persons)

When I arrived, the train had left.

By the time I arrived, the train had already left. (Left first, then arrived)

She had finished her work before lunch.

She had finished her work before lunch.

Note Contraction: I’d, she’d, they’d (= had).

3.2 The Earlier of Two Past Actions

The past perfect tense is used **along with** the simple past tense to indicate which of two past events happened **first or second**:

- The earlier event → **Past Perfect Tense** (had done).
- The later event → **Simple Past Tense** (did).

The film had started when we got there.

We got there, and the movie had already started.

Timeline Comparison: had started (earlier) → got there (later).

Note The past perfect is only used when it is necessary to emphasize the sequence; for straightforward chronological narration, the simple past can be used for both actions.

Common Errors

- × ~~After he had left, I had cleaned the room.~~ → ✓ After he had left, I **cleaned** the room. — Only the action that happened **earlier** takes the past perfect, not both.
- × ~~When I had arrived, the train left.~~ → ✓ When I arrived, the train **had left**. — Whichever happened first uses had done; reversing them reverses the timeline.
- × ~~I had seen this film.~~ (standalone sentence) → ✓ I **have seen** this film. — The past perfect requires a “past reference point”; without one, use the present perfect or simple past.
- Remember strong signal words: **by the time** + simple past, the main clause usually takes the past perfect: *By the time we arrived, the film **had started**.*

4 used to

4.1 Past Habits and States

used to	
used to past habit <i>I used to play</i>	didn't use to negative (no d) <i>I didn't use to</i>

used to: reference card grid

used to indicates habits that were done frequently in the past but are no longer done now, or past states.

Structure: + used to +

I used to play football.

I used to play football. (I don't anymore now)

There used to be a cinema here.

There used to be a cinema here.

Note used to refers only to the **past**; for current habits, use the simple present (I play football now).

4.2 Negation and Interrogative

For negation and questions, auxiliary **did** is required, and used reverts to **use**:

- **Negation:** didn't use to + base verb.
- **Question:** Did + subject + use to + base verb ?

I didn't use to like coffee.

I didn't use to like coffee.

Did you use to live here?

Did you use to live here?

Note In negatives / questions it is **use to** (without d): ~didn't used to~ × → didn't use to ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~I am used to play football.~ → Do not mix up these two distinct structures:
✓ I **used to play** football. (Used to do, but don't now) vs ✓ I **am used to playing** football. (Accustomed to doing)— Here, to is a preposition followed by -ing; also note **get used to** (gradually becoming accustomed).
- × ~I use to get up early.~ (meaning current habit) → ✓ I **usually** get up early. — use to has no present tense form; use usually for current habits.
- × ~She used to living in Shanghai.~ → ✓ She used to **live** in Shanghai. — used to is followed by the base verb.

5 Future forms review

5.1 will vs be going to

Future forms

will	going to	pres. cont.
decide / predict	a plan	arrangement
<i>I'll help</i>	<i>we're going to move</i>	<i>I'm meeting Tom at 3</i>

Future forms: reference card grid

When talking about the future, **will** and **be going to** each have specific focuses:

- **will**: spontaneous decisions, predictions, promises.
- **be going to**: existing plans, predictions based on evidence.

I think it will be cold.

I think it's going to be cold. (Prediction → will)

We are going to move house.

We are going to move house. (Plan → be going to)

Note Spontaneous decisions made at the moment always take will: *The bag is heavy — I'll carry it.*

5.2 Present Continuous for Arrangements

The **present continuous** can express future arrangements that have already been booked/confirmed (often with specific times or locations):

I am meeting the doctor at three.

I'm seeing the doctor at three o'clock. (Appointment confirmed)

Note be going to emphasizes “intention,” while the present continuous emphasizes “already arranged.” They are often interchangeable.

5.3 Time Adverbial Clauses

In time clauses introduced by **when**, **as soon as**, **before**, **after**, **until**, even when referring to the future, use the **simple present tense**:

I will call you when I arrive.

I'll call you as soon as I arrive.

Wait here until the rain stops.

Wait here until the rain stops.

Note Do **not** use will in time clauses: ~~when I will arrive~~ × → when I arrive ✓.

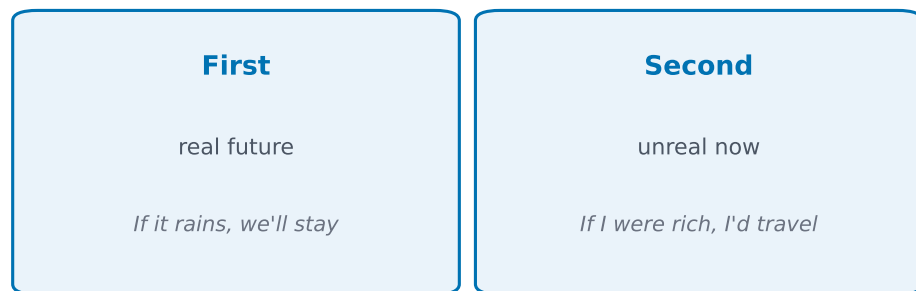
Common Errors

- × ~~I will meeting him tomorrow.~~ → ✓ I **will meet** him. / I **am meeting** him. — will + base verb, be + -ing; these two structures cannot be combined.
- × ~~What will you do tonight?~~ (asking about someone else's arrangement) → ✓ What **are you doing** tonight? — For asking about established arrangements, the present continuous sounds more natural.
- × ~~I'll go to the dentist tomorrow — I booked it last week.~~ → ✓ I **am going** to the dentist tomorrow. — For things already scheduled, do not use the spontaneous decision marker will.
- Use **Shall** for suggestions in questions: *Shall we go?* (Shall we go?) *Shall I open the window?* (Shall I open the window?)

6 Conditionals

6.1

Conditionals



Conditionals: reference card grid

- **Zero Conditional** (general truths): If + , .
- **First Conditional** (future possibilities): If + , will + .

If you heat water, it boils.

If you heat water, it boils. (General truth)

If it rains, we will stay in.

If it rains, we will stay at home. (Possible future)

Note Use the **simple present tense** in the if-clause, even when referring to the future: ~If it will rain~ × → If it rains ✓.

6.2 Second Conditional

The **Second Conditional** describes hypothetical situations regarding the **present or future that are unreal or unlikely**:

Structure: If + , would +

If I had a lot of money, I would travel.

If I had a lot of money, I would travel. (But I don't actually)

Note In the Second Conditional, the verb be is typically standardized as **were**: *If I were you, I would rest. (If I were you, I would rest.)*

6.3 unless

unless means “**except if / if ... not**”, equivalent to **if ... not**:

You will be late unless you hurry.

You'll be late unless you hurry. (= if you don't hurry)

Note unless already contains a negative meaning, so **do not add not** afterwards: ~unless you don't hurry~ ×.

Common Errors

- × ~If I would be rich, I would travel.~ → ✓ If I **were** rich, I would travel. — would appears only in the main clause; use the past tense in the if-clause.
- × ~If it rains, we would stay home.~ → ✓ If it rains, we **will** stay home. / If it **rained**, we **would** stay home. — Do not mix First and Second Conditionals; the entire sentence must follow one pattern.
- × ~If I was you, I would rest.~ → While heard in spoken English, use ✓ If I **were** you for exams and writing.
- Comma Rule: If the if-clause comes **before**, add a comma (If it rains**, ** we stay in.); if it comes **after**, no comma is needed (We stay in if it rains.).

7 The passive

7.1 Present / Past Simple Passive

Active → passive

Active	Passive
doer first	be + past participle
<i>Lu Xun wrote it</i>	<i>It was written by ...</i>

Active → passive: reference card grid

The passive voice places the **receiver of the action** in the subject position, emphasizing “what happened to” rather than who performed the action.

Structure: + **be** + (the tense of be determines the sentence’s tense)

- Present Simple Passive: am / is / are + past participle.
- Past Simple Passive: was / were + past participle.

English is spoken here.

English is spoken here.

The window was broken.

The window was broken.

Note Active to Passive: The object moves to the subject position, and the verb changes to **be** + **past participle**. *They built it.* → *It was built.*

7.2 by + Agent

To specify “**by whom**” the action was done, use **by** + **agent**:

This book was written by Lu Xun.

This book was written by Lu Xun.

When to use the passive?

- When the doer is unknown or unimportant: *The road was repaired.*
- To emphasize the receiver: *The painting was bought by a museum.*

Note If the agent is unimportant, **by ...** is often omitted: *The shop is closed.*

Common Errors

- × ~~The window was broke. / The book was wrote by him.~~ → ✓ was **broken** / was **written** — Use the **past participle** for the passive, not the past simple; memorize the third column of irregular verbs.
- × ~~It was happened last night.~~ → ✓ It **happened** last night. — Intransitive verbs like happen, appear, and die **do not have a passive form**.
- × ~~My phone was stolen by someone.~~ → ✓ My phone was stolen. — by someone / by people is redundant; delete it directly.
- Chinese says “I was born in...” using an active structure, but English always uses the passive: ✓ I **was born** in Chengdu.

8 Reported speech

8.1 Reporting Statements

Reported speech	
Direct	Reported
the words	tense back
"I am tired"	<i>He said he was tired</i>

Reported speech: reference card grid

Reported speech is used to **report** what someone said, without quotation marks. Common reporting verbs are **said** or **told**:

- **say** is followed **without** the listener: He said (that) ...
- **tell** is followed **with** the listener: He told **me** (that) ...

He said that he was tired.

He said he was tired. (Original quote: "I am tired.")

Note that can be omitted: He said he was tired. The meaning remains the same.

8.2 Backshifting Tenses

When reporting, if the reporting verb is in the past tense (said / told), the tense in the reported clause usually **shifts back one step**:

- am / is → **was**; are → **were**; do / does → **did**.
- will → **would**; can → **could**; present perfect / past simple → **past perfect**.

Direct Speech: *"I will help you,"* she said.

Indirect Speech:

She said she would help me.

She said she would help me. (will → would, I → she, you → me)

Pronouns and time expressions also change: I → he / she, now → then, today → that day, tomorrow → the next day.

Note If reporting a **general truth**, tenses need not shift: *He said the sun rises in the east.*

Common Errors

- × ~~He said me the truth.~~ / ~~He told that he was busy.~~ → ✓ He **told me...** / He **said (that)**... — say does not take a listener, tell must take a listener; this is the opposite of common mistakes.
- × ~~He asked me where did I live.~~ → ✓ He asked me where **I lived**. — Reported questions must change to **statement word order**, removing did.
- × ~~She asked me that I was hungry.~~ → ✓ She asked me **if / whether** I was hungry. — Report yes/no questions using if / whether, not that.
- × ~~He said he will come tomorrow.~~ → ✓ He said he **would** come **the next day**. — Tenses and time expressions must shift together.

9 Relative clauses

9.1 who vs. which / that

Relative pronouns

who	which	where	whose
a person	a thing	a place	belonging
<i>the man who called</i>	<i>the book which won</i>	<i>the town where ...</i>	<i>the girl whose bag ...</i>

Relative pronouns: reference card grid

Relative clauses provide **additional information** about a preceding noun. They are introduced by **relative pronouns**:

- **who**: refers to **people**.
- **which**: refers to **things**.
- **that**: refers to either people or things (common in informal speech).

The woman who lives next door is a doctor.

The woman living next door is a doctor.

This is the book which won the prize.

That is the award-winning book.

Note Relative pronouns go immediately after the **noun they refer to**, introducing supplementary information.

9.2 where, when, whose

- **where**: refers to **place**. **when**: refers to **time**. **whose**: indicates **possession** (“‘s”).

That’s the town where I grew up.

That is the town where I grew up.

She’s the writer whose books I love.

She is the writer whose works I like.

Note whose is followed directly by a noun (whose books), indicating “that person’s books”.

9.3 Omitting Relative Pronouns

When the relative pronoun acts as the **object** in the clause, it can be **omitted** (common in both speech and writing):

The film (that) we saw was great.

The movie (that) we watched was great.

How to decide:

- If the relative pronoun is the **subject** (followed immediately by a verb) → **cannot** omit.
- If the relative pronoun is the **object** (followed by “subject + verb”) → **can** omit.

Note Must be retained when acting as subject: *the man **who** called* (cannot omit who).

Common Errors

- × ~~The man which lives next door...~~ → ✓ The man **who** / **that**... — Do not use which for people.
- × ~~The book what I read...~~ → ✓ The book **that** / **which** I read... — English has no usage of what as a relative pronoun.
- × ~~This is the house which I live.~~ → ✓ ...the house **where** I live / ...the house which I live **in**. — When the clause lacks a preposition, either use where or supply the missing preposition.
- × ~~The friend who I met him yesterday...~~ → ✓ The friend who I met yesterday... — Since the relative pronoun already replaces the object, him / it cannot appear again in the clause.

10 Modals of deduction

10.1 must and can't (Certainty)

Modals of deduction

must	might / could	can't
sure it IS	maybe	sure it ISN'T
<i>She must be tired</i>	<i>It might rain</i>	<i>He can't be hungry</i>

Modals of deduction: reference card grid

Modal verbs can also express **deduction**. When you are **very certain**:

- **must**: must be (definite positive deduction).
- **can't**: can't be (definite negative deduction).

She must be tired.

She must be very tired. (Very certain)

He can't be hungry; he just ate.

He can't be hungry; he just ate.

Note Use **can't** for negative deduction (impossible), not **mustn't** (which means “prohibited”).

10.2 might, may, could (Possibility)

When you are **not entirely sure**, but only feel that something is **possible**:

- **might / may / could**: possible, perhaps.

It might rain later.

It might rain later.

They may be at home.

They might be at home.

Degree of Certainty Comparison:

- Very certain: **must** (is) / **can't** (is not).
- Uncertain: **might** / **may** / **could** (possible).

Note All these modal verbs are followed by the **base form of the verb**: might **be**, must **be** (not *might is*).

Common Errors

- × ~~It can be John at the door.~~ → ✓ It **could** / **might** be John. — Use *could* / *might* for speculation about a **specific instance**; *can* only indicates “general possibility.”
- × ~~He might not can come.~~ → ✓ He might not **be able to** come. — Two modal verbs cannot be used together; replace the second with *be able to* / *have to*.
- × ~~Maybe he be late. / It may be rain.~~ → ✓ **Maybe he is** late. / **It may rain**. — *maybe* is an adverb and follows normal sentence structure; *may* is a modal verb and is followed by the base form. Do not mix them up.
- × ~~She must is tired.~~ → ✓ She must **be** tired. — A modal verb is always followed by the base form of the verb.

11 Gerunds and infinitives

11.1 Verb + -ing

After the verb

+ -ing	+ to
enjoy, finish, avoid	want, decide, hope
<i>enjoy reading</i>	<i>want to go</i>

After the verb: reference card grid

Some verbs are followed by a **gerund** (verb-ing). Common examples include: *enjoy, like, love, hate, finish, stop, mind, suggest, avoid*.

I enjoy reading.

I enjoy reading.

She finished doing her homework.

She finished her homework.

Note A gerund functions as a noun; its form is **verb-ing**.

11.2 Verb + Infinitive

Other verbs are followed by an **infinitive** (to + base form). Common examples include: *want, need, hope, promise, learn, would like, plan*.

I want to learn English.

I want to learn English.

They decided to stay.

They decided to stay.

Note Some verbs accept both forms with similar meanings: *like, love, start, begin*. *I like swimming.* = *I like to swim.*

11.3 -ing after Prepositions

After a **preposition** (*in, on, at, of, about, for, good at, interested in...*), the verb must take the **-ing** form:

She's good at drawing.

She is good at painting.

Thank you for helping me.

Thank you for helping me.

Note The base form of a verb never follows a preposition: *~~good at draw~~* × → *good at drawing* ✓.

Common Errors

- × *~~I enjoy to read.~~* / *~~I want reading.~~* → ✓ I enjoy **reading**. / I want **to read**. — Which verb takes which form is fixed; memorize the collocations, do not swap them.
- Distinguish the two meanings of *stop*: *He stopped **smoking***. (Quit smoking) vs. *He stopped **to smoke***. (Stopped what he was doing to go smoke)— The meanings are completely different.
- × *~~I look forward to see you.~~* → ✓ I look forward to **seeing** you. — Here, *to* is a preposition and is followed by -ing.
- × *~~Swim is good exercise.~~* → ✓ **Swimming** is good exercise. — When a verb acts as the subject, use the -ing form.

12 too, enough, so, such

12.1 too and enough

too / enough

too + adj	adj + enough	enough + noun
more than needed <i>too hot</i>	just right <i>old enough</i>	sufficient <i>enough money</i>

too / enough: reference card grid

too and **enough** indicate degree, but their position and meaning differ:

- **too** + adjective = “too...” (negative excess), placed **before** the adjective.
- **enough** = “sufficient,” placed **after** the adjective and **before** the noun.

This coffee is too hot.

This coffee is too hot.

He isn't old enough to drive.

He isn't old enough to drive.

Note *enough* comes **after** the adjective (*old enough*) but **before** the noun (*enough money*).

12.2 so and such

so and **such** both mean “so / such,” used to intensify the tone:

- **so** + adjective / adverb: *so hot, so quickly*.
- **such** + (a/an) + (adjective) + **noun**: *such a hot day*.

The film was so boring.

That movie was so boring.

It was such a good idea.

That was really such a good idea.

Note Follow **so** with an **adjective** (*so good*); follow **such** with a **noun phrase** (*such a good idea*).

Common Errors

- × To praise “very happy” but say ~~I'm too happy!~~ → ✓ I'm **so** happy! — *too* carries a negative connotation (“excessively, to the point of being bad”); use *so* for praise and exclamation.
- × ~~The box is too much heavy.~~ → ✓ The box is **much too heavy**. — To intensify *too*, use *much too*; the word order is *much* first.
- × ~~The tea is too hot to drink it.~~ → ✓ The tea is too hot to drink. — In the *too...to* structure, the sentence subject serves as the object of *drink*, so do not write *it*.
- × ~~It was so a good idea.~~ → ✓ It was **such** a good idea. / The idea was **so** good. — If there is a noun, switch to *such*.