Went, Not Goed: Helping Your Child with Tricky Past Tense Words

Key points

- In Year 2 (the second year of Key Stage 1, for children aged about six to seven), children learn to talk and write about things that have already happened, which is called the past tense.
- Many common past tense words don't follow a set pattern: 'go' becomes 'went', 'see' becomes 'saw' and 'run' becomes 'ran'. These are called irregular verbs, because a verb is a 'doing' word and irregular means it doesn't follow the usual rule.
- Once children have learned the common '-ed' ending for past tense, as in 'jumped' or 'played', they often apply it to words that don't need it, so you might hear 'goed' or 'runned'.
- This is a normal, well-known stage of learning language, and it shows that your child is spotting patterns and using them, which is a sign of good thinking.
- Irregular past tense words are learned gradually through lots of listening, reading and talking, so it's fine if your child needs time and repeated examples to get them right.
- Your child's teacher will know how your child is getting on with this and can tell you what they are working on in class.

Things to try at home

- Play 'Silly Mistakes': say a sentence on purpose with a mistake, such as 'Yesterday I goed to the shop', and let your child spot it and put it right. Keep it light and laugh together.
- Use everyday chat to model the right word without correcting: if your child says 'I runned to school', you could reply 'Oh, you ran to school? Did you see anything nice on the way?'
- Make a set of picture cards with actions such as jump, eat, see and run, and sort them into piles, then match each one to its past tense word.
- Try a 'Yesterday' game at teatime: take turns to say one thing you did yesterday, using 'went', 'saw', 'ate' or 'ran' where you can, and see who can think of the most.
- Read together and point out past tense words in the story, such as 'went' or 'saw', and talk about what the characters did. Enjoying the story matters more than getting every word right.

Find out more

- GOV.UK: 'National curriculum in England: English programmes of study' (the official document describing what children should learn in English, including the requirement to use past tense verbs correctly and consistently).
- Your child's class teacher, who can explain how your child is progressing and suggest ways to help at home.
- Your school's website or parents' information evening, where teachers often share how they teach grammar and what you can do to support it. Schools may vary in how they approach this, so do ask.