Went, Not Goed: Teaching Year 2's Irregular Past Tense Verbs

If your child says 'goed' or 'runned' instead of 'went' or 'ran', this is a normal part of learning English. In Year 2 (the second year of Key Stage 1, usually ages 6 to 7), children learn to use past tense verbs correctly, including the common irregular ones. This guide explains why these mistakes happen, what they mean, and some gentle, playful ways to help at home.

What it is

A verb is a doing or being word, such as 'run' or 'go'. The past tense is the form we use to talk about something that has already happened, such as 'Yesterday I went to the park'. Most verbs are regular: we add -ed to the end, so 'walk' becomes 'walked' and 'jump' becomes 'jumped'. A smaller group of verbs are irregular, which means they change in other ways. 'Go' becomes 'went', 'see' becomes 'saw' and 'run' becomes 'ran'. The National Curriculum is the national framework of subjects and learning goals that most state schools in England follow. It asks Year 2 pupils to use the correct form of verbs in the past tense, including common irregular verbs. Getting this right is one of the building blocks of clear speaking and writing.

What happens

Children learn language by noticing patterns. Once a child has spotted that many past tense verbs end in -ed, they may start using that pattern for everything, including verbs they have not yet heard in their past form. So 'go' becomes 'goed' and 'run' becomes 'runned'. Teachers call this over-regularising, which simply means applying a rule more widely than it applies. It shows that your child has noticed how the language works, even though the rule does not fit every word. As they hear and read words like 'went' and 'ran' again and again in stories, conversations and books, the correct forms begin to stick. Children do not all move through this at the same pace. Your child might use an irregular form correctly in one sentence and an -ed form in the next. That is a normal part of the process and tends to settle with plenty of listening, reading and talking.

What it means for your child

In most cases, saying 'goed' is a sign of progress rather than a sign of falling behind. It shows that your child is working out how English fits together. Teachers are used to seeing these mistakes at this stage, and they usually show the correct forms in lessons without making a fuss. Schools handle spelling and grammar a little differently, and expectations can vary, so it is worth asking your child's teacher how they are getting on compared with what is expected for the year. If your child has special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or is learning English as an additional language (EAL, meaning English is not the main language spoken at home), they may take longer to master these forms. This is common, and their teacher can explain what support is in place.

How you can help at home

You do not need to drill or test your child. Short, relaxed moments work best. At teatime, ask 'What did you do at school today?' and enjoy the answers. If they say 'goed', repeat the sentence back with the correct form, such as 'You went to the library? What did you borrow?' This is gentle modelling, not correcting. When you read together, point out past tense words and ask, 'What did the dog do next?' You

could also play a sorting game with cards. Make three piles: add -ed (walk, jump), change in other ways (run and ran, swim and swam, go and went) and stays the same (put, cut, hit). Or take turns to act out a verb, such as 'swam' or 'sang', and let your child guess it. Keep sessions to a few minutes and stop when they lose interest.

Questions parents often ask

Should I correct my child every time? No. Constant correction can make children less keen to talk. Repeating the right form back to them, naturally, is usually enough. Will they grow out of it? Most children gradually use the correct irregular forms as they hear them often, but it is worth checking with the school if you are unsure. Does reading help? Yes, reading exposes children to the correct forms in print. Is my child behind if their English is not perfect yet? Not necessarily. Children learning EAL often go through the same stages, and their teacher can tell you where your child is. When should I speak to the school? If the mistakes continue for a long time with no improvement, or you have wider concerns about your child's speech or language, arrange a chat with the class teacher. They can advise on next steps, including any referral to specialists if needed.

Sources

- Department for Education, National curriculum in England: English programmes of study (Key Stage 1 section), GOV.UK
- Department for Education, National curriculum in England: framework document, GOV.UK