TO BE or not TO BE:
Present & Past Tense

What is TO BE?

TO BE is one of the most used verbs in the English language. It is important to know how to use it properly. This irregular verb is used for descriptions like: existence, nationality, identity, among others. It is also used as an **auxiliary verb** or **main verb**. After reading this infographic, try reading this paragraph again and identify TO BE in its sentences!

The Forms of TO BE:

Subject + Present/ Past TO BE

I am / was
You are / were
She is / was
He is / was
It is / was
We are / were
They are / were

As a Main Verb:

When it's used as a *main verb*, **TO BE** is followed by an adjective, location, state of being, name, etc.

Examples:
1. I am John (*name*).
2. You are at home (*location*).
3. It is important (*adjective*).
4. We were asleep (*state*).
5. She was able to travel.
6. Will was quick with a pun.

As an Auxiliary Verb:

We can also use the verb **TO BE** as an *auxiliary verb*. When it's used as an auxiliary verb, it's followed by a main verb in the progressive form (verbs with -*ing*). Use this formula:

Subject + TO BE (present/past) + main verb in the progressive form

Examples:
I am reading *Hamlet* by Shakespeare.
I was reading *Hamlet* by Shakespeare.

Negative Form of TO BE

Fear not! **TO BE** is also used in negative statements. Take the example in the previous section and make it negative using the following formula:

Subject + **TO BE** (present/past) + *not* + **main verb** in the **progressive form**

It would read like this:
I am *not* reading *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare.
Other Examples:
You are *not* asleep**!**
I was *not* able to call you yesterday.

TO BE in Questions

When using **TO BE** in questions, the formula **Subject + TO BE** is inverted:

TO BE + Subject
OR
TO BE + Subject + main verb in the **progressive form**
Examples:
It is important. -> Is *it* important?
You were at home. -> Were *you* at home?
She is reading. -> Is *she* reading?