

Smell, smelled and smelt

The irregular past and past participle form smelt is only used in British English.

Smell / smelt / smelt (GB)

Smell / smelled / smelled (US)

Smell can be used as a copular verb. In this case, we use an adjective to modify it. Note that ordinary verbs are modified by adverbs.

The soup smells awful. (Here the adjective awful modifies the copular verb smells.) (NOT The soup smells awfully.)

Roses smell beautiful. (NOT Roses smell beautifully.)

Smell can be used with the prepositions like and of.

She smelt like jasmine.

The room smelt of cigarettes and bear.

When someone or something smells, they smell bad.

He has smelly feet. (= His feet smell bad.)

Your dog smells. When are you going to give him a wash?

Note that when smell is used as a copular verb, it is not used in its ing form.

The steak smells funny. (NOT The steak is smelling funny.)

Smell can mean perceive something with the nose. In this case, too, it is not used in the progressive form.

I can smell something burning.

Progressive forms are possible when smell is used to say that we are using our noses to find out something.

'Why are you smelling those socks?' 'I'm just trying to see if they will do for another day.'