Narrative tenses

GRAMMAR

LEVEL
Intermediate

NUMBER
B2_1065G_EN

LANGUAGE
English
Goals

- Can identify which are the four narrative tenses in English and distinguish their uses.

- Can speak about past events and describe stories in detail using the narrative tenses.
She looked at his face again. She had seen him somewhere before; she was sure of it. He was smiling at her now and she realised he recognised her, too. Suddenly she remembered! He had been sitting opposite her on the train that morning. He was the man who had helped her when her purse had fallen and all her money had spilled out on the floor!
Preview and warm-up

- It’s good to live in the moment but we also need to be able to talk about the past! In this class you will **review** and **practise** the **past tenses** used in English. By the end of the class you should feel comfortable **telling stories** about the **past** and using all the different past tenses.

Which **past tenses** do you already know in English?
Reviewing the past simple

- We use the **past simple** to talk about **events** or **actions** in the **past that are finished**.
- To form the **past simple** we add **-ed** to the end of regular verbs.
- However, there are also many **irregular verbs** in English. To use irregular verbs in the **past simple** you need to memorise the appropriate verb endings.
- Below are some examples of how to use the **past simple**.

- When we **were** children we **went** to stay with our grandparents every year during the summer holidays.
- I **saw** him yesterday, he **looked** very unwell.
- I **played** tennis every day last week. It **was** great fun but I **was** exhausted by the end of the week!
Reviewing the past continuous

- We use the **past continuous** to describe actions in the **past** that were in progress while another action was started and completed.
- These actions or events can also be thought of as **unfinished at that moment in time**.
- You can see some examples of this tense below.

- We **were walking** to school when...
- Sarah **was sitting** on the sofa when...
- I **was looking** everywhere for my purse while...

- Often the **past continuous** tense is used in conjunction with the **past simple** to mark a contrast in time. We will find out more about this on the next slide!
Using the past simple and the past continuous to tell a story

- We can use the **past simple** and the **past continuous** to tell stories about the past.
- Often we use the **past continuous** tense to tell about an action that was **continuous**, or **going on in the background**, whilst we use the **past simple** to describe the **action** or **events**.

- It was raining so we didn’t go to the beach. Instead, we went bowling!
Grammar examples

- Here are some more examples of how you can use the **past simple** and the **past continuous** together to tell a story!

Kathy was sitting on the sofa when the phone rang. She got up to answer it.

The dog was running along the pavement towards me. I was scared and ran into a shop.
Recognising the past simple and past continuous

Read the text on the next slide together with your teacher. Can you recognise which parts of the text use the **past simple** and which parts use the **past continuous**?
We were walking to the cinema when we heard a loud noise. Katie turned around and screamed. ‘Look’, she yelled, ‘there’s an escaped tiger running towards us!’ I turned around and looked towards where she was pointing. Katie was shaking with fear but I had to laugh. ‘Katie’, I said, ‘that’s not a tiger, that’s Rosie, my next door neighbour’s cat!’
Complete the sentences

Look at the cards below. They all show the first half of a sentence using the past continuous. Can you complete each sentence using the past simple tense? Make each sentence as interesting as you can.

I was walking to work when...

She was sitting on the sofa when...

It was raining...

They were waiting for the bus when...
Think about the story about the tiger that you read earlier in the lesson. Can you try to tell this story from the perspective of the tiger/cat, and also from the perspective of Katie? Use the past simple and past continuous. Afterwards, tell your teacher a story about a time you got surprised!
Reviewing the past perfect

The past perfect is used to refer to an event that happened before another event in the past.

- Jenny had already left before we woke up in the morning.
- They had eaten all the cake by the time we arrived.
- Most of the items had been sold by the time we arrived.

We often use the past perfect in conjunction with the past simple.

- Jenny had already left before we woke up in the morning.
- They had eaten all the cake by the time we arrived.
- Most of the items had been sold by the time we arrived.
Reviewing the past perfect continuous

- The **past perfect continuous** tense is used to describe an action that started in the past and then continued up to another moment in the past.

- She **had been waiting** for her brother for over an hour. When he finally arrived she was very angry.
By the time he was 40 years old he had been working at the company for 20 years. She had been working there for 20 years but he had never been offered a promotion.
Complete the sentences using the past perfect. Be inventive!

1. By the time I was ten years old
2. By lunchtime yesterday
3. By the time we arrived
4. Before she left
5. By the time the summer came
Identifying the different tenses

Read the text on the next page. Can you identify all the different past tenses used?
The birthday party

He was feeling nervous. He had never planned a birthday party before, let alone a surprise party and now today was the big day! He hoped everyone would arrive on time. He wondered if his mother would guess the plans. She had been talking about her sixtieth birthday since last summer. She had never had a big party for her birthday before. He wanted to make sure that she would always remember this special occasion.
Describe the big picture

Use the picture below as inspiration to make at least 6 sentences that use both the past perfect and the past perfect continuous. You might want to use some of these verbs: wait, plan, work, say, prepare, threaten.
Using all the past tenses to tell a story

- When we tell stories about the past we often need to use all of the different past tenses to express ourselves and tell a narrative.
- The different tenses help us to define the moments at which certain events happened and place them in an order.

- She was tired. She had been walking for a long time. Her father had warned her that it was a long route, but she had not listened. Suddenly, she saw something in front of her. There was someone else walking just ahead of her on the same path!
Some more examples

- Can you identify the tenses used in each of the examples below?

Mark had been watching the football so he had not seen the dog eat the important papers.

She was waiting for the train. It was the middle of June and it was warm outside.
Describe the pictures

Use the pictures below as inspiration and make a sentence for each using the past perfect continuous and the past perfect.
I had been waiting for years and finally the big day had arrived....
Now it’s time to practise using all the past tenses together!
Tell stories to your teacher about the topics on the cards below. Use as many of the past tenses as you can when telling your stories.

- About a holiday
- About your first week at a job
- A story about something that happened when you were a child
- A story of your choice!
Think of the plot of your favourite book, film or TV programme. Can you retell this story to your teacher using the past tenses?
Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

Yes

No
Think about everything you have seen in this lesson. What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?

If you have time, go over the most difficult slides again.
In this class you reviewed the past simple, the past continuous, past perfect and the past perfect continuous! Can you make a sentence in each tense using each of the verbs below.
That means 24 sentences in total!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Past Simple</th>
<th>Past Continuous</th>
<th>Past Perfect</th>
<th>Past Perfect Continuous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>I ate</td>
<td>I was eating</td>
<td>I had eaten</td>
<td>I had been eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>I walked</td>
<td>I was walking</td>
<td>I had walked</td>
<td>I had been walking</td>
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<td>see</td>
<td>I saw</td>
<td>I was seeing</td>
<td>I had seen</td>
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<td>wear</td>
<td>I wore</td>
<td>I was wearing</td>
<td>I had worn</td>
<td>I had been wearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>rain</td>
<td>It rained</td>
<td>It was raining</td>
<td>I had rained</td>
<td>I had been raining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play</td>
<td>I played</td>
<td>I was playing</td>
<td>I had played</td>
<td>I had been playing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Homework writing activity

Show off your creative writing skills! Write a story and practise using all the past tenses covered in this lesson in your writing. The story should be on the topic, *a holiday I will never forget*. Try to write at least 400 words!
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