

## NARRATIVE TENSES: SIMPLE PAST, PAST CONTINUOUS, PAST PERFECT, PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

- Past simple
  - Describes the main events of the story
  - Describes sequences of events
  - It is the 'standard' narrative tense. If in doubt, go for past simple.
- Past continuous
  - Describes unfinished actions, especially around a certain time
  - Describes longer actions interrupted by shorter ones
  - Is often used for describing background actions
  - Is sometimes used to make the actions in a story seem more immediate, especially with the word *now*
- Past perfect
  - Describes actions which took place before the main actions in the story
- Past perfect continuous
  - Describes longer continuous actions which took place before the main actions in the story
  - Is sometimes used to explain the condition of people or things at the time of the main events in the story.

### Sequencing words

These words show the chronological sequence of events.

First of all, I (packed my suitcase)

Secondly, I .... (made sure I had all my documents)

Previously (before that) ..... I changed some money.

Then... I (called a taxi for the airport)

Later (on)... (when we were stuck in traffic, I realised...)

But before all that... (I had double checked my reservation)

Finally... (I arrived at the wrong check-in desk at the wrong airport for a flight that didn't go until the next day)

### Linking words

Use these words to link your ideas for the listener. Linking words can be used to show reason, result, contrasting information, additional information, and to summarise.

I booked a flight because....

As a result, I was late...

Although I had a reservation, I hadn't checked the airport name.

I made sure I had an up-to-date passport and I also took along my driving licence.

In short, I had made a complete mess of the holiday.

### Continuing: More sequencing words

Then,

After that,

Next,

As soon as / When + full clause,

... but then  
Immediately,

*Then, I started to get worried.*  
*After that, we knew that there would be no problem!*  
*Next, we decided on our strategy.*  
*As soon as we arrived, we unpacked our bags.*  
*We were sure everything was ready, but then we discovered some unexpected problems.*  
*Immediately, I telephoned my friend Tom.*

### **Interruptions / New Elements to the Story:**

Suddenly,  
Unexpectedly,

*Suddenly, a child burst into the room with a note for Ms. Smith.*  
*Unexpectedly, the people in the room didn't agree with the mayor.*

### **Events Occurring at the Same Time**

While / As + full clause  
During + noun (noun clause)

*While we were getting ready for the trip, Jennifer was making the reservations at the travel agent's.*  
*During the meeting, Jack came over and asked me a few questions.*

### **Ending**

Finally,  
In the end,  
Eventually,  
Lastly,

*Finally, I flew to London for my meeting with Jack.*  
*In the end, he decided to postpone the project.*  
*Eventually, we became tired and returned home.*  
*Lastly, we felt we had had enough and went home.*

### **Vocabulary**

Try to use a wide range of words to make your story more interesting. Remember that you can "exaggerate" when you tell a story, so instead of using words like "nice" or "bad", experiment with more interesting words, such as "beautiful", "fabulous", "wonderful", "horrible", "awful" or "terrible".

**Complete the sentences for situations in the past. Decide which tense you need to use.**

I [ ] [ ] [ ] (walk) home yesterday when I [ ] [ ] [ ] (see) a group of people in front of the church. They [ ] [ ] [ ] (laugh) and one man with a video camera [ ] [ ] [ ] (film) something, so I [ ] [ ] [ ] (go) to have a closer look. Three people [ ] [ ] [ ] (hold) long sticks and they seemed to be attacking a traffic warden!

The man with the video camera [ ] [ ] [ ] (notice) the look of horror on my face. He (8) [ ] [ ] [ ] (come) over to me and [ ] [ ] [ ] (explain) that it was a piece of performance art. The traffic warden was really an artist called Mark McGowan, who [ ] [ ] [ ] (dress) up in a warden's uniform. He [ ] [ ] [ ] (advertise) the event on a website, inviting people to come along and hit him with wooden sticks.

1. A plumber (come) [ ] [ ] [ ] to our house yesterday.
2. He (want) [ ] [ ] [ ] to repair our washing machine that (break) [ ] [ ] [ ] a few days before.
3. Before he (ring) [ ] [ ] [ ] at my door, he (look) [ ] [ ] [ ] for a parking space for about ten minutes.
4. While the plumber (repair) [ ] [ ] [ ] the washing machine, I (watch) [ ] [ ] [ ] the news.
5. Suddenly, I (realise) [ ] [ ] [ ] that they (show) [ ] [ ] [ ] our street on TV.
6. The reporter (say) [ ] [ ] [ ] that a car (crash) [ ] [ ] [ ] into a stop sign just before reaching the crossroads.
7. While I (listen) [ ] [ ] [ ] carefully to what (happen) [ ] [ ] [ ], someone (knock) [ ] [ ] [ ] at my door.
8. I (open) [ ] [ ] [ ] the door and (see) [ ] [ ] [ ] a police officer standing there.
9. He (ask) [ ] [ ] [ ] for the plumber.
10. As it (turn) [ ] [ ] [ ] out, it (be) [ ] [ ] [ ] our plumber's car that (roll) [ ] [ ] [ ] down the street.
11. In his haste, the plumber (forget) [ ] [ ] [ ] to put the handbrake on.

This \_\_\_\_\_ (happen) about five years ago. I \_\_\_\_\_ (come) back home from Turkey where I \_\_\_\_\_ (be) on holiday with some friends who \_\_\_\_\_ (rent) a bungalow in the mountains not far from Ankara, the capital.

Anyway, we \_\_\_\_\_ (sit) on the plane and \_\_\_\_\_ (just / take) off when there \_\_\_\_\_ (be) a loud bang from the right hand side of the plane and I could see a lot of smoke coming from one of the engines. Of course, everyone \_\_\_\_\_ (start) looking around but the plane \_\_\_\_\_ (carry on) flying normally. And then a few minutes later the pilot \_\_\_\_\_ (come) and said there was a problem with one of the engines and we'd have to return to the airport.

I felt pretty nervous, I can tell you, but I \_\_\_\_\_ (try) to concentrate on my book and about ten minutes later we \_\_\_\_\_ (land) without any problems. We \_\_\_\_\_ (have to) wait for about an hour, and then we got back on the plane. Actually it was a different plane, and I was pretty relieved that it was.

Last night I \_\_\_\_\_ (walk) home next to the river Thames, when something strange \_\_\_\_\_ (happen) to me. It was late at night and I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) a long and difficult day at work. There was a large full moon in the sky and everything was quiet. I was tired and lonely and I \_\_\_\_\_ (just have) a few pints of beer in my local pub, so I decided to stop by the riverside and look at the moon for a while.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (sit) on some steps very close to the water's edge and looked up at the big yellow moon and wondered if it really was made of cheese. I felt very tired so I \_\_\_\_\_ (close) my eyes and after a few minutes, I \_\_\_\_\_ (fall) asleep. When I woke up, the moon \_\_\_\_\_ (move) behind a cloud and it was very dark and cold. The wind \_\_\_\_\_ (blow) and an owl \_\_\_\_\_ (hoot) in a tree above me. I rubbed my eyes and started to get up, when suddenly I \_\_\_\_\_ (hear) a splash. I \_\_\_\_\_ (look) down at the water and saw something. Something terrible and frightening, and unlike anything I'd ever seen before. Something \_\_\_\_\_ (come) out of the water and \_\_\_\_\_ (move) towards me. Something green and strange and ugly. It was a long green arm and it \_\_\_\_\_ (stretch) out from the water to grab my leg. I was so scared that I couldn't move. I \_\_\_\_\_ (never be) so scared in my whole life. The cold green hand \_\_\_\_\_ (move) closer and closer when suddenly there was a blue flash and a strange noise from behind me. Someone \_\_\_\_\_ (jump) onto the stairs next to me. He \_\_\_\_\_ (wear) strange clothes and he had a crazy look in his eyes. He shouted "Get Back!" and \_\_\_\_\_ (point) something at the monster in the water. There was a bright flash and the monster hissed and disappeared.

I looked up at the man. He looked strange, but kind. "Don't fall asleep by the river when there's a full moon", he said "The Moon Goblins will get you." I \_\_\_\_\_ (never hear) of moon goblins before. I didn't know what to do. "Who... who are you?" I asked him. "You can call me... The Doctor." He said. I \_\_\_\_\_ (try) to think of something else to say when he

turned around and said, "Watch the stars at night, and be careful of the full moon". I was trying to understand what he meant, when there was another blue flash and I closed my eyes. When I opened them again, he \_\_\_\_\_ (go).

I couldn't believe what \_\_\_\_\_ (happen). What on earth were Moon Goblins, and who was the mysterious Doctor? And why had he saved me? I was determined to find the answers to these strange questions. I stood up, looked at the moon and quickly walked home.

