

NARRATIVE TENSES

B1 | Teens / Adults | Grammar Practice | 35-45 minutes

Learn and practise | Combine past tenses to tell a clear story.

1. READ: A surprise on the path

Read the conversation. Notice the bold grammar and how the speakers use it.

Nora: Why did you come home from your walk so early?

Eli: I **was following** the river path when I **saw** a deer.

Nora: That sounds lovely. What went wrong?

Eli: Nothing! I **had never seen** one so close, so I stopped to watch.

Nora: And then?

Eli: It ran off. I checked the time and realised I **had spent** half an hour there. I had to hurry back for work.

2. GRAMMAR: Background, events and earlier events

Past continuous gives background; past simple moves the story on; past perfect looks further back.

Use / form	Pattern	Example
Background	was/were + -ing	I was following the path.
Main event	past simple	I saw a deer.
Earlier event	had + past participle	I had never seen one.

Sequence: I stopped, took a photo and walked on.

Background: It was raining when we set off.

Earlier event: I was tired because I hadn't slept well.

A. CHOOSE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. I walked / was walking when I saw Jo.

2. She waved / was waving and came over.

3. I was hungry because I hadn't ate / eaten.

4. We were talking when it started / had started raining.

5. They had / were already left when I arrived.

6. At six, I was wait / waiting outside.

7. He opened / had opened the bag and looked inside.

8. I recognised her because we had met / meet before.

Read each answer aloud. Explain which meaning or time clue helped you.

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Use it | Complete a context, write sentences and speak with a partner.

B. COMPLETE: Helping a stranger

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the words in brackets.

1. Yesterday I _____ (walk) home when I heard someone shout.
2. I _____ (turn) around and saw a cyclist on the ground.
3. He was shaken because he _____ (hit) a hole in the road.
4. While I _____ (help) him, a driver stopped.
5. She _____ (offer) to call an ambulance.
6. He said he was fine, but he _____ (never / have) an accident before.

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1-2: Join the sentences with the word in brackets.

Example: I was reading. The bell rang. (when) **I was reading when the bell rang.**

1. We were eating. The lights went out. (when) _____
2. I was packing. Jo was checking tickets. (while) _____

3-4: Rewrite to show the earlier event. Example: I missed the bus, so I was late. **I was late because I had missed the bus.**

3. He lost his key, so he couldn't get in. _____
4. They ate earlier, so they weren't hungry. _____

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU

Write a short three-sentence story. Include background, a main event and an earlier event.

Example: **I was leaving work when it began to rain. I had left my umbrella at home.**

E. SPEAK WITH A PARTNER

Tell your story without reading every word. Your partner asks for one extra detail.

Listen for **background**, a **main event** and an **earlier event**. Swap roles.

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Answer key | Keep this page separate during student practice.

1. READ: A surprise on the path

Sample target language from the conversation:

Eli: I **was following** the river path when I **saw** a deer.

Eli: Nothing! I **had never seen** one so close, so I stopped to watch.

Eli: It ran off. I checked the time and realised I **had spent** half an hour there. I had to hurry back for work.

A. CHOOSE

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| 1. was walking | 2. waved |
| 3. eaten | 4. started |
| 5. had | 6. waiting |
| 7. opened | 8. had met |

B. COMPLETE: Helping a stranger

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. was walking | 2. turned |
| 3. had hit / hit | 4. was helping / helped |
| 5. offered | 6. had never had |

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1. We were eating when the lights went out.
2. While I was packing, Jo was checking tickets.
3. He couldn't get in because he had lost his key.
4. They weren't hungry because they had eaten earlier.

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU / E. SPEAK

Personal answers will vary. Check the target grammar.

Sample: I was walking to class when I saw my teacher outside. We had both forgotten that the building was closed. We went to a cafe instead.

Teacher note: Discuss tense choices through event order, not just signal words. Accept sensible alternatives where the meaning remains clear.