

Activity Type

Reading and writing exercises

Focus

Narrative tenses: past simple, past continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous

Aim

To learn four narrative tenses and how to use them to tell stories.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

30 minutes

Introduction

In this narrative tenses worksheet, students learn four narrative tenses and how to use them to tell stories.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet. Students begin by reading a short story and choosing the correct forms of verbs to practice four narrative tenses.

Exercise A - Answer key

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. bought | 9. had always lived |
| 2. had already been living | 10. hated |
| 3. knew | 11. saw |
| 4. looked | 12. ended |
| 5. was | 13. visited |
| 6. were walking | 14. had seen |
| 7. noticed | 15. bought |
| 8. was | 16. had been dreaming |

Students then match the four narrative tenses to their descriptions.

Exercise B - Answer key

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. past perfect | 3. past simple |
| 2. past perfect continuous | 4. past continuous |

Next, students use prompts to create sentences using the narrative tenses.

Exercise C - Answer key

1. I had been playing football for years before I broke my leg.
2. While I was doing my homework, my sister called me.
3. She had taken a cooking lesson only once before she cooked for me.
4. I bought a new laptop after I had been using my old one for years.
5. The stylist had already cut the girl's hair before she changed her mind.
6. By the time my guests arrived, I had already started eating.

In the last exercise, students complete the first part of a story using verbs in their correct form. Students then continue the story using the four narrative tenses and their own ideas. Finally, have the students read their stories to the class and provide feedback.

Exercise D - Answer key

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. decided | 5. picked |
| 2. had been planning | 6. drove |
| 3. had never been | 7. stopped |
| 4. were | 8. were standing |

A. Read the short story and choose the correct forms of the verbs.

First Time Buyers

Last year, my wife and I (1) *bought / were buying* our first house. We (2) *had already been living / were already living* together for 5 years before we bought our house, so we (3) *knew / were knowing* how to live together. I'll never forget the first house we (4) *looked / had looked at*. It (5) *was / was*



being a small house in the suburbs with small windows. While we (6) *were walking / had walked* around the house, I (7) *noticed / was noticing* how dark and depressing it (8) *was / had been*. I (9) *was always living / had always lived* in a house with a lot of light and big windows, so I instantly (10) *hated / was hating* it. We (11) *saw / had seen* a few more houses after that which were all quite nice. We (12) *ended / had ended* up buying the second house that we (13) *visited / were visiting*. We (14) *had been seeing / had seen* it twice before we (15) *bought / had bought* it, just to be sure. I (16) *had been dreaming / was dreaming* of this day for a long time. Now, we have moved in. I'm really happy.

B. Match the narrative tenses from the box to their descriptions.

past simple	past continuous	past perfect	past perfect continuous
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- is used for an action that took place before another action or event in the past.
- is used for an action in the past that was in progress before another past action or event.
- is used to describe a finished action or event in the past.
- is used to describe an action or event in progress at a specific time in the past.

C. Use the prompts to create sentences using the four narrative tenses.

1. I / play football for years / before / I break my leg

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2. While / I / do my homework / my sister call me

.....

3. She / take a cooking lesson only once / before / she cook for me

.....

4. I / buy a new laptop / after / I use my old one for years

.....

5. The stylist / already cut the girl's hair / before / she / change her mind

.....

6. By the time my guests arrive / I already start eating

.....

D. Complete the first part of the story using the verbs below in their correct form. Then, continue the story using the four narrative tenses and your own ideas.

drive stop pick plan stand decide be x 2

Last summer, my cousin and I (1) to go on a road trip across America. We (2) the journey for months when the day to leave finally arrived. We (3) never to



America before, so we (4) both really excited about the trip ahead. We (5) up the rental car from the airport and (6) it out on to the highway. After a few hours of driving, we (7) at a gas station. While we (8) outside the gas station, a long black limousine pulled up next to us. ..

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