

Nine mini-reading passages with exercises to practise the past simple tense.

A) Who said life was fair? Put the verbs in brackets into the past simple tense and do the T/F exercise.

Zara and Abdul were students at the same school. Abdul _____ (study) every night. He _____ (work) very hard and he _____ (think) he _____ (know) everything. Zara _____ (watch) TV every night and _____ (play) computer games. On the day before the exam, she _____ (do) a little bit of work. One week later, they _____ (get) their results. Guess what? Abdul _____ (fail) and Zara _____ (pass). Zara _____ (jump) for joy. Life can sometimes be unfair, _____ (think) Abdul. However, he wasn't bitter. He just _____ (smile) and _____ (say) 'Well done, Zara!'. 

True or false? Correct the false sentences:

1. They were students at a different school
2. Abdul was a lazy student
3. Zara watched the TV once a week
4. Zara did a small amount of work the night before the exam.
5. Zara was successful and Abdul was unsuccessful
6. Abdul felt angry about the situation.

Do you always revise for your exams?

B) Brave or stupid? Put the verbs into the past simple tense and answer the questions in full sentences.

Jana was late to catch her train for college. She _____ (run) into the station and _____ (trip) over. Disaster! Her art folder _____ (slip) out of her hands and _____ (fall) onto the railway track! A young man _____ (see) this and, immediately _____ (check) things out. He _____ (see) there was no train approaching, so he _____ (jump) onto the track and _____ (grab) Jana's folder. He _____ (give) it back to her. She was so grateful; she really couldn't believe someone had been so brave as to do what he _____ (do). 

- 1) Was Jana going to work?
- 2) Did she go to the bus station?
- 3) Why did she run?
- 4) What happened to her art folder?
- 5) Who saw what happened?
- 6) What did he do?
- 7) How did Jana feel about what the young man did?

So, was the young man brave or stupid, in your opinion?

C) Jack makes a schoolboy error. Read the passage and then answer the questions in full sentences.

Jack got up at 7 am and had his breakfast in the living room. He watched the news on TV and then left the house. He caught the bus and sat in the front seat. Thirty minutes later, he arrived at school. The school seemed quiet. Jack pushed the door but it was locked. He looked around and he saw the caretaker. The caretaker said, 'Jack, why have you come to school? It's Saturday! School is closed!' Jack couldn't immediately decide whether he was fed up with that, or really happy!

- 1) What time did Jack get up?
- 2) Where did he have his breakfast?
- 3) Did he watch cartoons on TV?
- 4) Did he catch the train to school?
- 5) Where did he sit?
- 6) How long did his journey to school take?
- 7) Did the school seem lively and busy?
- 8) Jack couldn't open the door. Why not?
- 9) Who did Jack spot (see)?
- 10) Why was the school closed?



How would you feel, if you arrived at school, but it was closed?

D) Family get-together (party). Your task is to put the correct question word in the gap.

Last Sunday, the Smith family had a get-together. They invited grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Mum, Dad, Jimmy and Sarah got up early to get everything ready. In the morning, Jimmy and Sarah washed and polished the glasses. Mum put some flowers into a vase. In the afternoon, Mum baked cakes and Dad put the barbecue on. Jimmy and Sarah got some party games ready. Everybody felt very excited. At 5pm, the first guest arrived. It was great granny. She waved and everybody smiled and clapped. The special occasion? Great granny was one hundred years old!

- 1) _____ did the Smith family have their party? *Last Sunday*
- 2) _____ did they invite? *Lots of family members.*
- 3) _____ did the family get up early? *To get everything ready*
- 4) _____ cleaned and polished the glasses? *Jimmy and Sarah*
- 5) _____ did Mum put the flowers? *Into a vase*
- 6) _____ did Mum do in the afternoon? *She baked cakes*
- 7) _____ did Dad do in the afternoon? *He put the barbie on*
- 8) _____ got the party games ready? *Jimmy and Sarah*
- 9) _____ did everybody feel? *Very excited*
- 10) _____ arrived first? *Great granny*
- 11) _____ did they all do when they saw great granny? *Smiled and clapped*
- 12) _____ old was granny? *100*



Would you like to live to be 100? Why or why not?

E) Do you know who my dad is? Your task is to replace 'said' with a more suitable word from the box.

A girl and a boy were in the canteen at school. 'I think the head teacher is a complete idiot' the boy said to the girl. 'My dad says the same. He says the school would be a better place without him.'

'Do you know who I am?' said the girl.

'No' said the boy, 'Why should I? Anyway, who are you?'

'Actually, I'm the head teacher's daughter!' she said.

'Do you know who I am?' the boy said.

The girl folded her arms, sat back and looked at the boy. 'No, actually, I don't.'

'Thank goodness for that!' the boy said with a sigh of relief. Then he went and sat beside his friends.



Stated, announced, asked, replied, answered, questioned, inquired, retorted, wondered, demanded

A girl and a boy were in the canteen at school. 'I think the head teacher is a complete idiot' the boy

1) _____ to the girl. 'My dad says the same. He says the school would be a better place without him.'

'Do you know who I am?' 2) _____ the girl.

'No' 3) _____ the boy, 'Why should I? Anyway, who are you?'

'I'm the head teacher's daughter!' she 4) _____.

'Do you know who I am?' the boy 5) _____.

The girl folded her arms, sat back and looked at the boy. 'No, actually, I don't.'

'Thank goodness for that!' the boy 6) _____ with a sigh of relief. Then he went and sat beside his mates.

F) Humpty Dumpty is a famous nursery rhyme supposedly about King Richard III, who died in 1485

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

1. Where did Humpty sit?
2. What happened to him?
3. Who could not help him?
4. When did this (supposedly) happen?



What was your favourite nursery rhyme and why?

G) Tom and his dad went fishing: Put the verbs into the past simple and then answer the questions.

Tom and his dad often went camping together. Tom's dad _____ (love) fishing and one day last Spring, they _____ (decide) to go fishing. Tom _____ (feel) very excited. It was a beautiful sunny day. They _____ (arrive) at the fishing lake and _____ (set) up their fishing rods. Suddenly, Tom _____ (see) a big fish. Then, he felt the fish tugging on his rod. He _____ (pull) it in and _____ (land) it. His dad said, 'Wow, well done, Tom! You are a natural!' Tom looked at the fish. It was wriggling about and gasping. He _____ (pick) it up and _____ (take) the hook out of its throat. Then, he _____ (throw) it back in the lake and it _____ (swim) away. 'Dad, I felt sorry for the fish,' Tom said. 'I don't like fishing after all. It's cruel! Sorry dad.' 'No worries, son,' remarked Tom's dad. 'Maybe I'll have better luck when I bring your sister.'

- 1) Who did Tom go fishing with?
- 2) Where did they go?
- 3) When did they go?
- 4) Who caught a fish?
- 5) What did the fish do?
- 6) Why did Tom throw it back in?
- 7) Was Tom's dad upset or annoyed about it?
- 8) How did he react to Tom's confession?



Is fishing cruel? Justify your opinion.

H) Yikes! There's a monster under my bed! Match up the sentence beginnings and endings.



Little Jemima always had bad dreams. She dreamt there were bad things under her bed. At between 12 midnight and 2 a.m every night, she woke up, with a bad dream and she went to her parents' bedroom.

'Mum and dad, there's a monster under my bed'. The next night: 'There's a devil under my bed'. The night after, 'There's an alien under my bed.'

It went on for weeks. Jemima's parents got no sleep. One day, her dad had a brilliant idea. He sawed the legs off Jemima's bed! Now, there could be nothing under her bed! That night, the parents went to bed, feeling very happy. At one in the morning, Jemima opened their bedroom door and went in. She said: 'Mum and dad, there's an alien in my wardrobe!'

1. Jemima suffered from	a. parents every night about monsters	<i>Have you ever had nightmares about monsters and things?</i>
2. She always woke up	b. had sorted the problem out	
3. She complained to her	c. of monster or something under her bed	
4. There was always some kind	d. the parents felt good about things	
5. Her dad thought he	e. at about the same time every night	
6. After dad sawed the bed legs off,	f. recurring nightmares	

I) All about yesterday: so what did you do? Answer the questions in full sentences.

1. What time did you get up?
2. What did you have for dinner?
3. Who did you eat dinner with?
4. Did you go out? If so, where?
5. When did you do your school work/studying?
6. What online activity did you do?
7. Did you watch any TV, or films? Describe what you watched.
8. What time did you go to bed?