

# 95 Linking words for stories and instructions

'Well, you see officer, first a rabbit ran across the road and I stopped quickly.

Then the car behind me stopped and almost hit me, but after that, another car came up really fast and hit the car behind me.

That hit my car and pushed it into the tree.

Then another car came up too fast and another, and in the end, there were six cars there!'



## 1 Describing events in the past

When we describe the order of events in the past, we use the linking words *first*, *then*, *after that* and *in the end*.

- We use *first* for the first event:  
*First a rabbit ran across the road ...*
- We use *then* and *after that* for more events. We usually use *then* before *after that*:  
*... then the car behind me stopped ... after that, another car ...*
- We use *in the end* for the last event of many, or to mean after a long time:  
*In the end, there were six cars there. In the end, we got our luggage back from the airline.*

In writing we often use *after* + -ing and *before* + -ing to describe the order of events.

Compare:

*I went to bed after I locked the back door.*

→ *Mycroft went to bed after locking the back door.*

*I decided to travel before I went to university.*

→ *Many school leavers travel before going to university.*

! Don't use the infinitive *to* after *before* and *after*:

✗ *Always check the oil in your car before to drive a long way.*

✓ *Always check the oil in your car before driving a long way.*

**NATURAL ENGLISH** Don't use too many linking words together because it can sound unnatural:

✗ *First I got up, then I had a shower. After that I had breakfast and then I went to get the bus ...*

✓ *First I got up and had a shower. Then I had breakfast and went to get the bus ...*

## 2 Giving instructions

We often use the linking words *first*, *next*, *then*, *finally* to give instructions:  
*First, take six eggs, ... Next, put a little butter in a pan.*

We use *finally* for the last instruction, not *in the end*:

*First, boil some milk in the pan. Then add the chocolate powder to the milk and mix. Finally, pour it into a cup and enjoy it!*

## Practice

### 1 GRAMMAR IN USE Choose the correct words in *italics* in the story.

Last night I was driving home along an empty motorway. Suddenly, I saw a car behind me – it came quite close. (0) *(Then)* / *After* it started flashing its lights. (1) *First* / *In the end*, I decided not to stop but (2) *first* / *then* I saw signs for a petrol station, so I decided to stop there. (3) *After that* / *After* driving into the petrol station, I parked in front of the restaurant. (4) *In the end* / *Then* I noticed the other car again, so I waited (5) *after* / *before* opening my car door. A man and a woman got out of the car and I could see they were police officers, so (6) *in the end* / *first* I got out and spoke to them. They explained that one of my back lights wasn't working and that's why they were following me.

### 2 Look at the pictures. Then complete the instructions for booking train tickets on the Internet.



It's easy to book your train tickets online now – just follow these simple steps.

- |                                                    |         |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 0 Go to <u>our website Train tickets online</u> .. | 3 ..... |
| 1 First, choose .....                              | 4 ..... |
| 2 Then, .....                                      | 5 ..... |

### 3 GRAMMAR IN USE Read the story below. Then put the words in 1–5 in the right order and add a linking word or phrase.

- |                                                 |         |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 0 <u>First, a letter came in the post</u> ..... | 3 ..... |
| 1 .....                                         | 4 ..... |
| 2 .....                                         | 5 ..... |

This really happened to my aunt and uncle. (0) in the post/a letter/came one day. It said that a taxi would collect them at 6.00 the next Saturday evening. (1) to a show/arrived/with tickets/another letter. They thought it was a bit strange, but my uncle is a lawyer, with lots of important clients, and they thought the tickets came from one of them. So the next Saturday evening they took the taxi into the town. But, (2) going/into the theatre/phoned/my uncle/a friend who works for the police. (3) went/the show/to see/they and had a great time. (4) went home/they/in the taxi. They were worried when they arrived home, because the front door was open, but (5) was/OK/everything, because my uncle's friend was in the house, with two other police officers and the man who had tried to rob their house while they were at the show.