

A

By ... = not later than:

- ☐ I sent the documents to them today, so they should receive them **by Monday**. (= on or before Monday, not later than Monday)
- ☐ We'd better hurry. We have to be home **by 5 o'clock**. (= at or before 5 o'clock, not later than 5 o'clock)
- ☐ Where's Sarah? She should be here **by now**. (= now or before now – so she should have already arrived)

This milk has to be used **by 14 August**.

B

We use **until (or till)** to say *how long* a situation continues:

- ☐ 'Shall we go now?' 'No, let's **wait until** it stops raining.' or '... **till** it stops raining.'
- ☐ I couldn't get up this morning. { I **stayed in bed until** half past ten.  
I **didn't** get up **until** half past ten.

Compare **until** and **by**:Something *continues* **until** a time in the future:

- ☐ Joe **will be away until** Monday. (= he'll be back *on* Monday)
- ☐ I'll **be working until** 11.30. (= I'll stop working *at* 11.30)

Something *happens* **by** a time in the future:

- ☐ Joe **will be back by** Monday. (= he'll be back not later than Monday)
- ☐ I'll **have finished my work by** 11.30. (= I'll finish my work not later than 11.30.)

C

You can say '**by the time** something happens'. Study these examples:

- ☐ It's too late to go to the bank now. **By the time we get there**, it will be closed. (= the bank will close between now and the time we get there)
- ☐ (*from a postcard*) Our holiday ends tomorrow. So **by the time you receive this postcard**, I'll be back home. (= I will arrive home between tomorrow and the time you receive this postcard)
- ☐ Hurry up! **By the time we get to the cinema**, the film will already have started.

You can say '**by the time** something happened' (for the past):

- ☐ Karen's car broke down on the way to the party last night. **By the time she arrived**, most of the other guests had left. (= it took her a long time to get to the party and most of the guests left during this time)
- ☐ I had a lot of work to do yesterday evening. I was very tired **by the time I finished**. (= it took me a long time to do the work, and I became more and more tired during this time)
- ☐ We went to the cinema last night. It took us a long time to find somewhere to park the car. **By the time we got to the cinema**, the film had already started.

Also **by then** or **by that time**:

- ☐ Karen finally got to the party at midnight, but **by then**, most of the other guests had left. or ... but **by that time**, most of the other guests had left.

## 120.1 Complete the sentences with **by**.

- We have to be home not later than 5 o'clock.  
We have to be home by 5 o'clock.
- I have to be at the airport not later than 8.30.  
I have to be at the airport .....
- Let me know not later than Saturday whether you can come to the party.  
..... whether you can come to the party.
- Please make sure that you're here not later than 2 o'clock.  
Please make sure that .....
- If we leave now, we should arrive not later than lunchtime.  
If we leave now, .....

## 120.2 Put in **by** or **until**.

- Steve has gone away. He'll be away until until Monday.
- Sorry, but I must go. I have to be home ..... 5 o'clock.
- I've been offered a job. I haven't decided yet whether to accept it or not. I have to decide ..... Friday.
- I think I'll wait ..... Thursday before making a decision.
- It's too late to go shopping. The shops are open only ..... 5.30 today. They'll be closed ..... now.
- I need to pay the phone bill. It has to be paid ..... tomorrow.
- Don't pay the bill today. Wait ..... tomorrow.
- A: Have you finished redecorating your house?  
B: Not yet. We hope to finish ..... the end of the week.
- A: I'm going out now. I'll be back at about 10.30. Will you still be here?  
B: I don't think so. I'll probably have gone out ..... then.
- I'm moving into my new flat next week. I'm staying with a friend ..... then.
- I've got a lot of work to do. ..... the time I finish, it will be time to go to bed.
- If you want to take part in the competition, you have to apply ..... 3 April.

## 120.3 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use **by** or **until**.

- David is away at the moment. He'll be away until Monday.
- David is away at the moment. He'll be back by Monday.
- I'm just going out. I won't be very long. Wait here .....
- I'm going out to buy a few things. It's 4.30 now. I won't be long. I'll be back .....
- If you want to apply for the job, your application must be received .....
- Last night I watched TV .....

## 120.4 Read the situations and complete the sentences using **By the time** ...

- I was invited to a party, but I got there much later than I intended.  
By the time I got to the party, most of the other guests had left.
- I intended to catch a train, but it took me longer than expected to get to the station.  
....., my train had already left.
- I wanted to go shopping after finishing my work. But I finished much later than expected.  
....., it was too late to go shopping.
- I saw two men who looked as if they were trying to steal a car. I called the police, but it was some time before they arrived.  
....., the two men had disappeared.
- We climbed a mountain and it took us a very long time to get to the top. There wasn't much time to enjoy the view.  
....., we had to come down again.