Writing skills practice: A short story – exercises

Look at the short story and do the exercises to practise and improve your writing skills.

Preparation

Match the part of the story to what usually happens in it and write a–c next to the numbers 1–3.

1……..	beginning	a.	a problem or difficulty is introduced
2……..	middle	b.	the problem or difficulty is resolved
3……..	ending	c.	the characters and the situation are introduced

A short story

It was Katia's 20th birthday and she was looking forward to seeing her friends. They were meeting at *Mamma Mia's*, her favourite Italian restaurant, for a special birthday dinner. Katia was excited and got to the restaurant at exactly 7 o'clock, the time they had arranged to meet. She looked around for a familiar face, but no one had arrived yet. So she decided to wait outside and stood patiently in the warm evening sunshine.

The restaurant quickly filled up with customers, but none of them were Katia's friends. 'Where are they?' she thought. At half past seven she was still waiting, so she called her best friend Isa. 'Why doesn't she answer her phone?' Katia asked herself. Then she called Jonty, Alex and Yoko, but they didn't answer either. 'What's going on?' she wondered.

At 8 o'clock Katia went home. Her friends had forgotten her birthday and she felt lonely and miserable. She opened the front door and walked into the dark house. The living room door was closed. 'How strange,' she thought because she always left it open. Nervously, she opened the door. Suddenly the lights went on and all her friends jumped up and shouted 'Surprise!' So they hadn't forgotten and in the end it was the best birthday ever.

When you write a story, use ...

- the **past simple**, **past continuous** and the **past perfect**.
- **adjectives** and **adverbs**.
- **direct speech** with **reporting verbs** and **punctuation**.
- **discourse markers** e.g. *then, after that* or *in the end*.

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1. Check your understanding: multiple choice – choose a title

Circle the best title for the story.

a. The accident

b. The surprise

c. My lucky day

2. Check your understanding: true or false

Circle *True* or *False* for these sentences.

1.	Katia didn't want to celebrate her birthday.	*True*	*False*
2.	Katia was the first person to arrive at the Italian restaurant.	*True*	*False*
3.	Katia waited outside the restaurant for 30 minutes.	*True*	*False*
4.	Jonty is Katia's closest friend.	*True*	*False*
5.	Katia went home after waiting for her friends for an hour.	*True*	*False*
6.	Katia's friends hadn't forgotten her birthday.	*True*	*False*

3. Check your writing: matching – story structure

Match the parts of the story with the examples and write a–d next to the number 1–4.

1……..	beginning	a.	'So they hadn't forgotten and in the end it was the best birthday ever.'
2……..	middle	b.	'Then she called Jonty, Alex and Yoko, but they didn't answer either. "What's going on?" she said to herself.'
3……..	ending	c.	'They were meeting at Mamma Mia's, her favourite Italian restaurant, for a special birthday dinner.'
4……..	final line	d.	'Suddenly the lights went on and all her friends jumped up and shouted "Surprise!".'

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4. Check your writing: grouping – adjectives and adverbs

Write the words in the correct group.

unexpected	freezing	quickly	nervously
sadly	exciting	huge	quietly
slowly	enjoyable	unexpectedly	happily
strange	patiently	awful	fantastic

adjectives	adverbs

5. Check your writing: error correction – punctuation

Rewrite the sentences with the correct punctuation.

1. Where does he live she asked

   .....

2. I can't believe what's happened he said

   .....

3. Follow that car she shouted

   .....

4. Why doesn't he call me back she asked herself

   .....

Discussion
Have you ever had a special birthday celebration? Do you like writing stories?

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