

# Narrative tenses

## Past simple



We use the past simple to talk about consecutive actions in the past.

**Example:** When he **arrived**, she **made** a cake.

(He arrived, then she started the action)

Also use it for the main events in a story.

**Example:** It all **happened** two years ago.

## Past continuous

Longer, continuous past action. It is often an action which was in progress when another action happened.

Example:

When he **arrived**, she **was making** a cake.

(He arrived, the action was in progress, she was in the middle of the action)

## Past perfect simple



Use it to talk about an action which happened and was finished before the main event.

Example:

When he **arrived**, she **had made** a cake.

(He arrived, the action was already finished)

## Past perfect continuous

Use it for a longer continuous action that was going on before the main event.

Example:

When he **arrived**, she **had been making** a cake.

(She probably still had her apron on or something which showed what she had just been doing, a visual evidence or a smell)

### BE CAREFUL

Some verbs are rarely used in the continuous form.

Verbs of the mind: know / understand / believe / think / want / mean /

Verbs of emotions: love / hate / like / prefer / care

Verbs of possession: have / own / belong

Other verbs: cost / need / contain / depend



### EXERCISE ONE Underline the correct option

- 1-When I arrived at the party I saw Tim **had drunk/had been drinking** too much.
- 2-I **had been having/was having** a shower when suddenly the phone rang.
- 3-As soon as Peter arrived in the office, his boss **started/had started** to shout at him.
- 4-Mary was sweating. She **had run/had been running** for about two hours.
- 5-While she **had/was having** dinner the doorbell **was ringing/rang**. It was her best friend.
- 6- She had a headache last night. She **was watching/had been watching** too much television.
- 7-I was **breaking/broke up** with my boyfriend after the party. He **was/was being** very upset.
- 8-While I **was making/made** a cup of tea Michael arrived so I offered him one.
- 9-When I phoned Tony his mother told me he **had been/had gone** out and asked me to call back later.
- 10-My sister was very upset when she **came/was coming** back from school. She **had been failing/had failed** the history exam.

## EXERCISE TWO

Fill the gaps of the following story using the correct form of the verbs: past simple, past continuous, past perfect simple or past perfect continuous.

Last Monday a very funny thing \_\_\_\_\_ (happen) to me. Well, it \_\_\_\_\_ (not be) so funny when it happened, but now I can't help smiling when I think about it.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (get up) at 7 o'clock in the morning, as usual. I was very tired that Monday because I \_\_\_\_\_ (be) to a party on Sunday night and it \_\_\_\_\_ (finish) very late. After getting up, I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) a shower and I \_\_\_\_\_ (make) myself a cup of coffee. I \_\_\_\_\_ (not have) anything to eat because I \_\_\_\_\_ (not be) hungry.



Afterwards I \_\_\_\_\_ (brush) my teeth, combed my hair, \_\_\_\_\_ (take) my coat and my purse and \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) the house.

As I \_\_\_\_\_ (walk) to the bus stop, it surprised me to see the streets \_\_\_\_\_ (be) very quiet. No traffic jams and no crowds rushing to work or school. When I \_\_\_\_\_



(arrive) at the bus stop only one person \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for the bus. I waited for longer than usual. In fact, when the bus \_\_\_\_\_ (come) I \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for more than twenty minutes.

When I \_\_\_\_\_ (get) off the bus, I crossed the road and \_\_\_\_\_ (go) into the building. Again I \_\_\_\_\_ (be) shocked to see there was nobody there.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (take) the lift and finally arrived in the office. I \_\_\_\_\_ (try) to get in but I \_\_\_\_\_ (not can). I \_\_\_\_\_ (not know) what to do so I \_\_\_\_\_ (take) the lift and went down again. In the hall I \_\_\_\_\_ (see) Bill, the porter.



-Good morning, Bill. What's the matter today? I \_\_\_\_\_ (just be) upstairs and there's nobody at the office. The building is very quiet and the office is closed. What's going on?

-Good morning, miss Parker -said Bill smiling- \_\_\_\_\_ (not notice) it's Easter Monday today?

-Oh my God! Now I understand why the streets \_\_\_\_\_ (be) so empty, why there \_\_\_\_\_ (be) no traffic and why the office was locked!

I \_\_\_\_\_ (go) back home. I \_\_\_\_\_ (get up) so early for nothing. As soon as I \_\_\_\_\_ (arrive) I \_\_\_\_\_ (go) back to bed.