

GRAMMAR

B2

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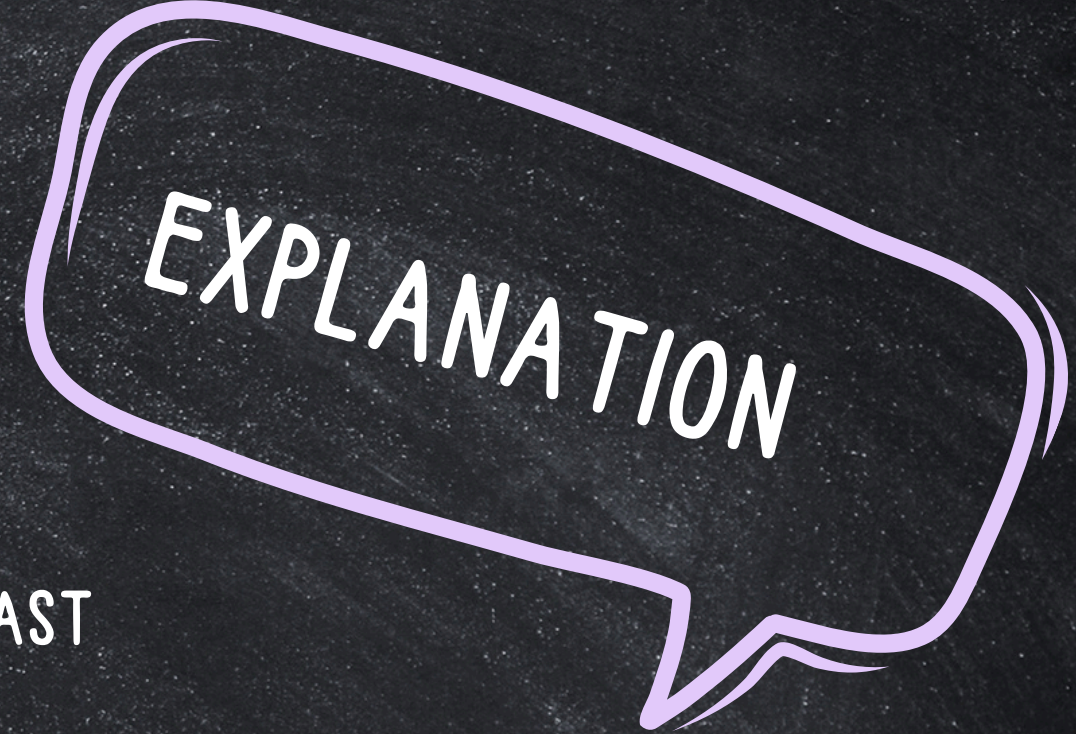
narrative tenses





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WHAT ARE NARRATIVE TENSES?



EXPLANATION

NARRATIVE TENSES ARE THE VERB TENSES WE USE WHEN WE TELL STORIES OR DESCRIBE PAST EVENTS.

THEY HELP US TO:

- SET THE BACKGROUND (WHAT WAS HAPPENING),
- DESCRIBE THE MAIN EVENTS (WHAT HAPPENED),
- SHOW WHAT HAD ALREADY HAPPENED BEFORE (EARLIER PAST), AND
- EXPLAIN WHAT HAD BEEN HAPPENING FOR SOME TIME BEFORE SOMETHING ELSE.

THE FOUR MAIN NARRATIVE TENSES ARE:

1. PAST SIMPLE → THE MAIN EVENTS ("I WOKE UP LATE AND RAN TO THE STATION.")
 2. PAST CONTINUOUS → BACKGROUND OR INTERRUPTED ACTIONS ("IT WAS RAINING WHILE I WAS WALKING HOME.")
 3. PAST PERFECT SIMPLE → SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE MAIN EVENT ("I MISSED THE TRAIN BECAUSE I HAD LEFT HOME LATE.")
 4. PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS → LONGER ACTIONS HAPPENING BEFORE ANOTHER PAST EVENT ("SHE WAS TIRED BECAUSE SHE HAD BEEN STUDYING ALL NIGHT.")
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WHY DO WE NEED TO LEARN THEM?

- WHEN WE TELL A STORY, WE DON'T WANT ALL THE VERBS TO SOUND THE SAME. IF WE ONLY USE PAST SIMPLE, THE STORY SOUNDS FLAT OR CONFUSING.
-  "I WOKE UP. I LEFT HOME. I MISSED THE TRAIN."
-  "I HAD WOKEN UP LATE, AND WHILE I WAS RUNNING TO THE STATION, I REALISED I HAD FORGOTTEN MY PHONE."
- NARRATIVE TENSES HELP US MAKE STORIES CLEAR, VIVID, AND INTERESTING.
- PAST SIMPLE = WHAT HAPPENED
- PAST CONTINUOUS = WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE BACKGROUND
- PAST PERFECT = WHAT HAD ALREADY HAPPENED
- PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS = WHAT HAD BEEN HAPPENING FOR SOME TIME
- THEY ARE USED IN EVERYDAY CONVERSATION (TELLING ANECDOTES, DESCRIBING HOLIDAYS, SHARING NEWS) AND IN LITERATURE, MOVIES, AND HISTORY TEXTS.

WHY?



PAST SIMPLE

MEANING

WE USE THE PAST SIMPLE TO TALK ABOUT COMPLETED ACTIONS IN THE PAST. IT IS OFTEN USED TO TELL MAIN EVENTS IN A STORY, USUALLY IN ORDER [SEQUENTIALLY].

- EXAMPLE: "I WOKE UP LATE AND RAN TO THE STATION."
 - FIRST, I WOKE UP LATE.
 - THEN, I RAN TO THE STATION.
 - BOTH ACTIONS ARE FINISHED.

FORM

- AFFIRMATIVE: SUBJECT + VERB-ED (REGULAR) / IRREGULAR VERB
 - SHE WALKED TO SCHOOL. / HE RAN TO SCHOOL.
- NEGATIVE: SUBJECT + DID NOT + BASE VERB
 - SHE DIDN'T WALK TO SCHOOL.

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PAST SIMPLE

- QUESTION: DID + SUBJECT + BASE VERB
DID SHE WALK TO SCHOOL?
PRONUNCIATION
- REGULAR VERBS OFTEN ADD -ED:
 - WALKED /Wɔːkt/, PLAYED /pleɪd/, WANTED /'wɒntɪd/.
- IRREGULAR VERBS MUST BE MEMORIZED: WENT, RAN, ATE.
- IN NATURAL SPEECH, WEAK FORMS AND LINKING ARE COMMON:
 - I WOKE UP → /aɪ 'wɒk ʌp/

TIMELINE

TWO SHORT POINTS ON A PAST TIMELINE, ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

CCQS [CONCEPT-CHECKING QUESTIONS]

- DID THE ACTION FINISH? → YES
- IS IT IN THE PAST? → YES
- IS IT A LONG OR SHORT ACTION? → SHORT/FINISHED

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PAST
CONTINUOUS

MEANING

WE USE THE PAST CONTINUOUS TO DESCRIBE:

1. BACKGROUND ACTIONS (THINGS HAPPENING AT A CERTAIN TIME IN THE PAST).
2. INTERRUPTED ACTIONS (A LONG ACTION STOPPED BY A SHORT ACTION).
3. ATMOSPHERE/SETTING IN STORIES.

- EXAMPLE: "IT WAS RAINING WHILE I WAS WALKING HOME."

- THE RAIN WAS HAPPENING IN THE BACKGROUND.

- WALKING HOME WAS ALSO HAPPENING AT THE SAME TIME.

FORM

- AFFIRMATIVE: SUBJECT + WAS/WERE + VERB-ING

- SHE WAS WALKING. / THEY WERE TALKING.

- NEGATIVE: SUBJECT + WAS/WERE NOT + VERB-ING

- SHE WASN'T WALKING.

- QUESTION: WAS/WERE + SUBJECT + VERB-ING

- WAS SHE WALKING?

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PAST
CONTINUOUS

PRONUNCIATION

- WAS → OFTEN /WƏZ/ (WEAK FORM).
- WERE → OFTEN /WƏ(R)/ IN CONNECTED SPEECH.
- EXAMPLE: "WE WERE WAITING" → /WI WƏ 'WEɪtɪŋ/.

TIMELINE

A LONG BAR IN THE PAST, SOMETIMES CUT BY A SHORT PAST SIMPLE ACTION.

- EXAMPLE: "I WAS READING WHEN THE PHONE RANG."
 - READING = LONG ACTION (ONGOING).
 - PHONE RANG = SHORT ACTION (INTERRUPTS).

CCQS

- WAS THE ACTION FINISHED? → NOT NECESSARILY.
- WAS IT IN PROGRESS? → YES.
- DID ANOTHER ACTION HAPPEN DURING IT? → YES.



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PAST PERFECT
SIMPLE

MEANING

WE USE THE PAST PERFECT SIMPLE TO DESCRIBE AN ACTION THAT HAPPENED BEFORE ANOTHER ACTION IN THE PAST.

IT'S THE "EARLIER PAST."

• EXAMPLE: "I MISSED THE TRAIN BECAUSE I HAD LEFT HOME LATE."

○ ACTION 1 (EARLIER): I HAD LEFT HOME LATE.

○ ACTION 2 (LATER): I MISSED THE TRAIN.

FORM

• AFFIRMATIVE: SUBJECT + HAD + PAST PARTICIPLE

○ SHE HAD FINISHED THE REPORT.

• NEGATIVE: SUBJECT + HAD NOT (HADN'T) + PAST PARTICIPLE

○ SHE HADN'T FINISHED THE REPORT.

• QUESTION: HAD + SUBJECT + PAST PARTICIPLE

○ HAD SHE FINISHED THE REPORT?



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PAST PERFECT
SIMPLE

PRONUNCIATION

- HAD IS OFTEN CONTRACTED TO 'D: I'D LEFT, SHE'D GONE.
- WEAK FORM: /HƏD/ OR /ƏD/ → I HAD LEFT → /AI HƏD LEFT/ OR /AI ƏD LEFT/.

TIMELINE

TWO PAST ACTIONS:

- EARLIER EVENT = PAST PERFECT (HAD + PP).
 - LATER EVENT = PAST SIMPLE.
- [EXAMPLE: LEAVING LATE HAPPENED BEFORE MISSING THE TRAIN].

CCQS

- WHICH ACTION HAPPENED FIRST? (LEAVING HOME LATE).
- WHICH HAPPENED SECOND? (MISSING THE TRAIN).
- ARE BOTH ACTIONS IN THE PAST? (YES).



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PAST PERFECT
CONTINUOUS

MEANING

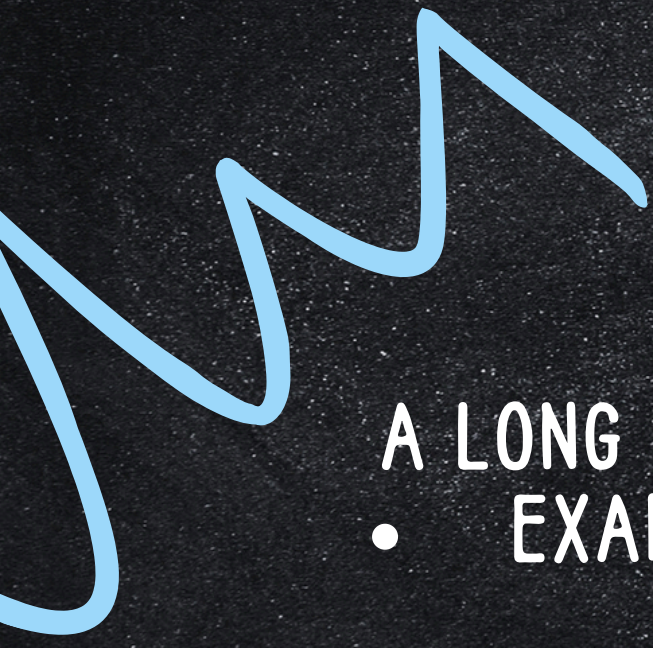
WE USE THE PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS TO TALK ABOUT A LONGER ACTION THAT WAS HAPPENING BEFORE ANOTHER ACTION/EVENT IN THE PAST, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE WANT TO FOCUS ON THE DURATION OR ACTIVITY ITSELF.

- EXAMPLE: "SHE WAS TIRED BECAUSE SHE HAD BEEN STUDYING ALL NIGHT."
 - LONG ACTION (BEFORE): STUDYING ALL NIGHT.
 - RESULT (LATER): SHE WAS TIRED.

FORM

- AFFIRMATIVE: SUBJECT + HAD + BEEN + VERB-ING
 - HE HAD BEEN WORKING ALL DAY.
- NEGATIVE: SUBJECT + HAD NOT (HADN'T) + BEEN + VERB-ING
 - HE HADN'T BEEN WORKING ALL DAY.
- QUESTION: HAD + SUBJECT + BEEN + VERB-ING
 - HAD HE BEEN WORKING ALL DAY?





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TIMELINE

A LONG BAR SHOWING CONTINUOUS ACTION BEFORE ANOTHER PAST EVENT.

- EXAMPLE: STUDYING ALL NIGHT (LONG BAR) → SHE WAS TIRED (LATER PAST).

CONTRAST WITH PAST PERFECT SIMPLE

- SHE WAS TIRED BECAUSE SHE HAD STUDIED ALL NIGHT. (FOCUS: RESULT)
- SHE WAS TIRED BECAUSE SHE HAD BEEN STUDYING ALL NIGHT. (FOCUS: ACTIVITY/DURATION).

CCQS

- DID SHE STUDY ONCE OR FOR A LONG TIME? (FOR A LONG TIME).
- WAS THE STUDYING BEFORE SHE WAS TIRED? (YES).
- DO WE CARE ABOUT THE RESULT OR THE ACTIVITY? (ACTIVITY/DURATION).

PAST PERFECT
CONTINUOUS



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PRACTICE

- WHILE I ____ [WALK] HOME, IT SUDDENLY ____ [START] TO RAIN.
- →
• SHE ____ [ALREADY EAT] WHEN HER FRIEND CALLED.
- →
• HE ____ [PLAY] FOOTBALL FOR TWO HOURS WHEN IT GOT DARK.
- →
• I ____ [WATCH] TV WHEN THE PHONE ____ [RING].
- →
• BY THE TIME WE ____ [ARRIVE], THE FILM ____ [ALREADY START].
- →
• THEY ____ [NOT FINISH] THEIR HOMEWORK WHEN THE TEACHER CHECKED.
- →
• _____

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ANSWER KEY

WHILE I ____ [WALK] HOME, IT SUDDENLY ____ [START] TO RAIN.

→ WAS WALKING / STARTED

SHE ____ [ALREADY EAT] WHEN HER FRIEND CALLED.

→ HAD ALREADY EATEN

HE ____ [PLAY] FOOTBALL FOR TWO HOURS WHEN IT GOT DARK.

→ HAD BEEN PLAYING

I ____ [WATCH] TV WHEN THE PHONE ____ [RING].

→ WAS WATCHING / RANG

BY THE TIME WE ____ [ARRIVE], THE FILM ____ [ALREADY START].

→ ARRIVED / HAD ALREADY STARTED

THEY ____ [NOT FINISH] THEIR HOMEWORK WHEN THE TEACHER CHECKED.

→ HAD NOT FINISHED



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PRACTICE

PUT THE SENTENCES INTO THE CORRECT ORDER TO FORM A LOGICAL STORY.

- A. WHILE I WAS WAITING, I CHECKED MY PHONE FOR MESSAGES.
- B. THE BUS FINALLY ARRIVED, AND I GOT ON.
- C. I HAD BEEN STANDING THERE FOR ALMOST 30 MINUTES BEFORE THE BUS CAME.
- D. YESTERDAY MORNING, I LEFT HOME LATE.
- E. I HAD FORGOTTEN MY WALLET, SO I HAD TO RUN BACK HOME TO GET IT.
- F. WHEN I CAME BACK TO THE BUS STOP, THE BUS HAD ALREADY GONE.





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ANSWER KEY

D - I LEFT HOME LATE. [PAST SIMPLE: MAIN EVENT BEGINS.]

E - I HAD FORGOTTEN MY WALLET... [PAST PERFECT SIMPLE: EARLIER PAST ACTION.]

F - THE BUS HAD ALREADY GONE. [PAST PERFECT SIMPLE: SHOWS SOMETHING FINISHED BEFORE I RETURNED.]

C - I HAD BEEN STANDING THERE FOR 30 MINUTES... [PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS: FOCUS ON DURATION BEFORE BUS ARRIVED.]

A - WHILE I WAS WAITING, I CHECKED MY PHONE... [PAST CONTINUOUS: BACKGROUND; PAST SIMPLE: SHORT ACTION.]

B - THE BUS FINALLY ARRIVED... [PAST SIMPLE: MAIN EVENT, END OF SEQUENCE.]

