

2.1 Narrative forms

GR2.1)))

- 1 I **arrived** at midnight.
- 2 He **didn't realize** how dangerous it was.
- 3 **Did** they **arrive** in time to save him?
- 4 We **were walking** along the beach, when we saw someone waving at us.
- 5 We **had been** on the train for about an hour, when it suddenly stopped.

A narrative is a description of a past event. We generally use three main verb forms in a narrative.

- We use the past simple for the main events in a story.

Most past simple verbs are formed by adding *-ed* to the infinitive (*want* → *wanted*). However, many common verbs are irregular (*make* → *made*).

We **wanted** to leave early the next morning so we went to bed at 10 p.m.

Something **made** a loud noise.

Negatives and questions are formed with *did* and the infinitive without *to*.

We **didn't recognize** the stranger who was standing outside the house.

What **did** he **want** with us?

- We use the past continuous for background events. We also use it for longer actions interrupted by a shorter event.
She **was sitting** in the corner of the room.
They **were having** dinner when the phone rang.

We form the past continuous with *was/were* and the *-ing* form.
I **was feeling** nervous.

- We use the past perfect for events that happened *before* one of the main events or that happened before the time of the story.
I **'d stayed** in the same hotel twice before.

We form the past perfect with *had* and the past participle.
I **'d taken** the train to London an hour before.

- 1 Put the underlined events in the order they happened or started.
 - 1 (a) Jenny and I started our website in order to market (b) the clothes we had designed while (c) we were studying together at university.
 - 2 (a) I decided that I wanted to become a pilot while (b) I was sitting in the garden one day and (c) saw several aeroplanes crossing the sky.
 - 3 (a) I first noticed the man while (b) I was travelling by train from Paris to Milan. (c) He was reading a book by my favourite author. (d) I'd been watching him for about an hour when (e) he spoke to me.
- 2 Choose the correct options to complete narrative extracts 1–7.
 - 1 We *were walking* / *'d walked* about two kilometres before we *realized* / *were realizing* that we *left* / *'d left* the map behind.
 - 2 We *went* / *'d gone* for a walk when we *were finishing* / *'d finished* the meal.
 - 3 The sun *was shining* / *had shone*. People *sat* / *were sitting* on the grass in the park.
 - 4 I *was* / *'d been* exhausted after a long day at work, so I *went* / *was going* to bed early.
 - 5 Sam *didn't recognize* / *wasn't recognizing* me, even though we *were meeting* / *'d met* a few weeks before.
 - 6 I *locked* / *was locking* the office door after I *'d checked* / *was checking* that everyone *went* / *had gone* home.
 - 7 My parents first *met* / *had met* when they *were* / *had been* at university together. They *were both studying* / *had both studied* history.
- 3 Complete the text with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

I'll always remember the time we were struck by lightning when we ¹ *were flying* (fly) back from Singapore. We ² _____ (be) in the air for about an hour, and the plane ³ _____ (move) up and down quite a lot. Outside you ⁴ _____ (can) see flashes of lightning across the sky and dark clouds. Suddenly there ⁵ _____ (be) a loud bang. At first a few people ⁶ _____ (start) screaming. But then the whole plane ⁷ _____ (become) strangely quiet. The pilot ⁸ _____ (speak) to tell us we were about to land, which was a great relief to everyone. But just as we ⁹ _____ (land), the whole plane ¹⁰ _____ (start) shaking violently again. In the end we ¹¹ _____ (land) safely. When we ¹² _____ (get off) the plane, we ¹³ _____ (see) that there ¹⁴ _____ (be) an enormous hole in the tail fin.

2.2 Time linkers

GR2.2)))

- 1 They realized the story was false **as soon as** they found the boy.
- 2 I saw Paul **while** I was walking to work.
- 3 They were working for the same newspaper **when** they met each other.
- 4 We were waiting for Julia outside the cinema. **Meanwhile**, she was waiting for us at the bus station.
- 5 **By the time** I realized, it was too late.
- 6 There were many scientific discoveries **during** the 18th century.
- 7 We lived in Warsaw **until** I was twelve.

We use time linkers to show how the timing of events in a story relate to one another. Some of the more common time linkers include:

as soon as/while

- **as soon as** (one thing happens immediately after another)
*I called her **as soon as** I saw the story on TV.*
- **while** (something happens while something else is in progress, or two things are in progress at the same time)
*I met Ursula **while** we were skiing.*
*Could you wait here **while** I find the manager?*

We can often use *when* in a similar way to *while*.
*They lost their passports **when** they were waiting in the airport.*
We use *when* (not *while*) to introduce an action that 'interrupts' an action already in progress.
*I was cycling to the shops **when** I fell off my bike.*

meanwhile/by the time (that)

- **meanwhile** (two things happen at the same time, but in two different sentences)
*Tom and I drove to the city centre. **Meanwhile**, Anna drove to our house. As a result, we missed each other.*
- **by the time (that)** (something is completed before the main event happens)
***By the time** we got there, Mark had left.*

during/until

- **during** (something happens at a point within a certain period of time)
*I fell asleep **during** the film.*
- **until** (something happens up to a particular point in time)
*I was awake **until** about four in the morning.*

1 Choose the correct options.

- 1 I found some old newspapers **while** / *meanwhile* / *during* I was tidying up the attic recently. They all had stories about famous hoaxes in them.
- 2 I almost fell asleep *during* / *while* / *meanwhile* the meeting this afternoon. It was so boring.
- 3 The US belonged to the UK *by the time* / *until* / *while* 1776, when it gained independence.
- 4 I was looking for my phone. *By the time* / *Meanwhile* / *As soon as*, my wife had found it and was looking for me.
- 5 We called the police *by the time* / *meanwhile* / *as soon as* we discovered the house had been robbed.
- 6 We spent ages looking for the shop and *as soon as* / *while* / *by the time* we found it, it was closed.
- 7 There were many important discoveries *during* / *while* / *by the time* the 1800s.
- 8 Luke and I met *during* / *meanwhile* / *while* we were working together in a café.

2 Complete the text with the time linkers in the box.

as soon as by the time during (x2) meanwhile while

Although it's very popular nowadays, ¹*during* the 1950s pasta was an unusual meal in the UK. Not many British people had been to Italy, and very few people knew how pasta was made. So, for April Fool's Day in 1957, the BBC news programme *Panorama* decided to make a story about spaghetti growing on trees. ²_____ the programme, viewers were told that the harvest that year was particularly good because of the weather. And ³_____ the presenter explained how spaghetti was grown, there was a film of workers in the background cutting the spaghetti from the trees. ⁴_____ the programme had been broadcast, the BBC started receiving phone calls from people who wanted to grow their own spaghetti. ⁵_____, the BBC continued the joke by instructing anyone who wanted to grow a spaghetti tree to 'place a piece of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce.' ⁶_____ the story was revealed to be an April Fool's Day joke, hundreds of people had contacted the BBC.

3 Complete the sentences with the correct time linker.

- 1 I woke up three times *during* the night.
- 2 Sorry I didn't speak to you earlier, but I phoned you _____ I could.
- 3 We were very late and the party had finished _____ we got there.
- 4 We walked all day _____ it got dark, and then we went home.
- 5 We just couldn't find the plane tickets. We looked everywhere. _____, the taxi to the airport was waiting for us outside.