

Narrative Tenses

Practice Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Past Simple main events	Past Continuous background / action in progress	Past Perfect earlier completed action	Past Perfect Continuous earlier ongoing action / duration
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Exercise 1 — Choose the Best Tense

Choose the correct form to complete each sentence.

1. When I got home, my flatmate _____ dinner. (cooked / was cooking)
2. By the time we arrived, the film _____. (started / had started)
3. I _____ down the street when I saw an old friend. (walked / was walking)
4. She was exhausted because she _____ all night. (studied / had been studying)
5. He _____ the window, looked outside and called the police. (opened / had opened)
6. They _____ for over an hour before the doctor finally saw them. (waited / had been waiting)
7. I didn't recognise the neighbourhood because it _____ so much. (changed / had changed)
8. While we _____ for the bus, it began to snow. (waited / were waiting)
9. The ground was wet because it _____. (rained / had been raining)
10. We _____ the lights off and left the building. (turned / had turned)

Exercise 2 — Complete the Sentences

Put the verb in brackets into the correct narrative tense.

1. When the teacher entered, the students _____. (talk)
2. I was hungry because I _____ breakfast. (not eat)
3. By midnight, they _____ the report. (finish)
4. She _____ home when her phone suddenly rang. (drive)
5. Tom felt nervous because he _____ in public before. (never speak)
6. We _____ for twenty minutes when the rain started. (walk)

Exercise 3 — Past Perfect Simple or Continuous?

Complete the sentences with the Past Perfect Simple or Past Perfect Continuous.

1. He was out of breath because he _____ for the bus. (run)
2. She was relieved because she _____ the exam. (pass)
3. They were tired because they _____ since early morning. (travel)
4. I couldn't get into the house because I _____ my keys at work. (leave)
5. The children were covered in mud because they _____ outside. (play)
6. By the time the guests arrived, we _____ everything. (prepare)

Exercise 4 — Story in Context

Complete the story with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

Last Friday, I 1. _____ (leave) work later than usual. It 2. _____ (rain) heavily, and people 3. _____ (run) for buses and taxis. I 4. _____ (walk) for about ten minutes when I suddenly realised that I 5. _____ (leave) my phone in the office. By the time I 6. _____ (get) back, the security guard 7. _____ (lock) the main entrance. Luckily, he recognised me because we 8. _____ (speak) several times before.

Exercise 5 — Correct the Mistake

Each sentence contains one mistake in the narrative tense. Rewrite it correctly.

1. When I arrived, they watched TV.
2. She had been finished the report before lunch.
3. I was knowing the answer, but I didn't say anything.
4. By the time we got there, the shop already closed.
5. He was tired because he worked all night before the meeting.

Exercise 6 — Build a Short Narrative

Complete the prompts with your own ideas. Try to use at least three different narrative tenses.

1. It was getting dark when _____.
2. I had never _____.
3. We had been _____.
4. Suddenly, _____.

Exercise 7 — Your Turn

Write a short story of 80–100 words. Use at least three narrative tenses and underline the verb forms you use.

Answer Key

Exercise 1

1. was cooking
2. had started
3. was walking
4. had been studying
5. opened
6. had been waiting
7. had changed
8. were waiting
9. had been raining
10. turned

Exercise 2

1. were talking
2. had not eaten / hadn't eaten
3. had finished
4. was driving
5. had never spoken
6. had been walking

Exercise 3

1. had been running
2. had passed
3. had been travelling
4. had left
5. had been playing
6. had prepared

Exercise 4

1. left
2. was raining
3. were running
4. had been walking
5. had left
6. got
7. had locked
8. had spoken

Exercise 5

1. When I arrived, they were watching TV.
2. She had finished the report before lunch.
3. I knew the answer, but I didn't say anything.
4. By the time we got there, the shop had already closed.
5. He was tired because he had been working all night before the meeting.

Exercise 6 — Sample answers

Answers will vary. Possible examples:

1. It was getting dark when we finally found the path.
2. I had never seen the town so quiet before.
3. We had been walking for hours and were exhausted.
4. Suddenly, we heard a loud noise behind us.