Narrative Tenses – Practice Exercises

Exercise 1: Choose the Correct Tense

1. When I arrived at the station, the train already _____.

A) left   B) was leaving   C) had left   D) had been leaving

2. She _____ TV when the lights suddenly went out.

A) watched   B) was watching   C) had watched   D) had been watching

3. We were tired because we _____ all day.

A) worked   B) were working   C) had worked   D) had been working

4. He didn't recognise her because she _____ a lot since they last met.

A) changed   B) was changing   C) had changed   D) had been changing

5. It _____ heavily when we left the house.

A) rained   B) was raining   C) had rained   D) had been raining

Exercise 2: Complete the Story

Put the verbs in brackets into the correct narrative tense.

It _____ (be) late, and the streets _____ (get) quieter. I _____ (walk) home when I suddenly _____ (hear) footsteps behind me. I _____ (think) about my plans for the weekend and _____ (not notice) the man at first. He _____ (follow) me for several minutes before I finally _____ (turn) around.

Exercise 3: Sentence Transformation

1. I finished dinner. Then she arrived.

→ She arrived after I _____. (Past Perfect)

2. He worked all morning. That's why he was exhausted.

→ He was exhausted because he _____ all morning. (Past Perfect Continuous)

3. The phone rang. She read a book.

→ She _____ a book when the phone rang. (Past Continuous)

4. They left before we reached the office.

→ When we reached the office, they _____. (Past Perfect)

Exercise 4: Find the Mistake

Each sentence contains one mistake with narrative tenses. Find it and correct it.

1. I was knowing something was wrong as soon as I entered the room.

2. She had been left before we arrived.

3. They were finished dinner when the guests came.

4. He didn't answer because he worked at the time.

Exercise 5: Short Writing Task

Write 80–120 words.

It was raining heavily when I realised I had made a serious mistake.

Use at least three different narrative tenses.

Answer Key

Exercise 1:

1. had left

2. was watching

3. had been working

4. had changed

5. was raining

Exercise 2 (sample):

was / were getting / was walking / heard / had been thinking / didn't notice / had been following / turned

Exercise 3:

1. had finished dinner

2. had been working

3. was reading

4. had left

Exercise 4:

1. knew

2. had left

3. had finished

4. was working