# Lesson Plan: Narrative tenses in storytelling

**Level:** Intermediate/Advanced (B2/C1)
**Time:** 75-90 minutes
**Grammar Focus:**

- **Past Simple** – main events

- **Past Continuous** – background / interrupted actions

- **Past Perfect** – earlier past (events before another past event)

# 1. Objectives (5 minutes)

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Accurately contrast **past simple, past continuous, and past perfect**

- Use narrative tenses naturally in spoken and written stories

- Avoid common tense-mixing errors in storytelling

# 2. Lead-in / Schema Activation (5–7 minutes)

**Activity: Story hook**
Teacher tells a short story with gestures:

> *Yesterday evening, I was walking home when I realized I had left my phone at school.*

Ask students:

- Which action was **in progress**?

- Which action happened **first**?

- Which action moved the story forward?

Elicit tense use without naming it yet.

# 3. Presentation: Meaning & Use (15 minutes)

## A. Narrative Functions

Write on the board:

> *It was raining, and people were running for cover.*
> *Suddenly, a car stopped.*
> *The driver had seen the accident earlier.*

Elicit and clarify:

| Tense | Narrative Role | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Past Continuous | Background / scene | *It was snowing.* |
| Past Simple | Main actions | *A car stopped.* |
| Past Perfect | Earlier past / causes | *He had seen the accident.* |

Use a **timeline** to show sequence:

Past Perfect → Past Simple → Now

## B. Form Review (Brief – Advanced Level)

• **Past Simple:** verb + -ed / irregular

• **Past Continuous:** was/were + verb-ing

• **Past Perfect:** had + past participle

Emphasize **choice**, not form memorization.

# 4. Controlled Practice (10–15 minutes)

## Activity 1: Tense Choice

Students choose the correct tense:

1. While I _____ (drive) home, I _____ (hear) a loud noise.

2. She _____ (never / see) the place before she _____ (move) there.

3. We _____ (wait) for an hour when the bus finally _____ (arrive).

Pair check → class feedback with **justification**.

# 5. Analysis & Noticing (10 minutes)

## Activity 2: Text Deconstruction

Provide a short narrative paragraph.

Students:

- Underline **past continuous**

- Circle **past simple**

- Box **past perfect**

Discuss:

- Why did the writer choose each tense?

- Could any tense be changed? What would happen to the meaning?

# 6. Semi-Controlled Practice (15 minutes)

## Activity 3: Sentence Expansion

Give students prompts:

> *I was studying when…*
> *By the time we arrived…*
> *They had already…*

Students expand each into **2–3 sentence mini-narratives**.

Peer feedback focuses on **tense logic**, not grammar alone.

# 7. Communicative Production (20 minutes)

## Activity 4: Storytelling Task

### Option A: True Story

"Tell a story about a surprising or stressful moment."

**Option B: Visual Prompt**

Use an image or sequence of pictures.

Requirements:

• Use **all three narrative tenses**

• Include at least **one interruption** and **one earlier past event**

Students tell stories in small groups.

# 8. Error Correction & Refinement (5–10 minutes)

Teacher notes errors during speaking.
Board common issues:

❌ *When I arrived, they ate dinner.*
✅ *When I arrived, they were eating dinner.*

❌ *I was tired because I worked all day.*
✅ *I was tired because I had worked all day.*

Elicit corrections and explanations.

# 9. Writing Extension / Homework

Choose one:

1. Write a **200–250 word narrative** using all three tenses.

2. Rewrite a simple story by adding background and earlier events using narrative tenses.