

Lesson Plan: Time expressions & tense consistency

Level: Intermediate/Advanced (B2–C1)

Time: 75–90 minutes

Language Focus:

- Time expressions (*by the time, while, during, already, still, recently, eventually, beforehand*)
- Logical tense consistency across clauses and discourse

1. Objectives (5 minutes)

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

- Select appropriate **time expressions** to show sequence and duration
- Maintain **tense consistency** in multi-clause sentences and extended discourse
- Identify and correct subtle tense-shift errors in advanced texts

2. Lead-in / diagnostic (5–7 minutes)

Write on the board:

Yesterday, I've finished the report and now I was waiting for feedback.

Ask students:

- Is this sentence natural?
- Where does the tense consistency break?

Elicit:

- Incorrect shift from **past** → **present perfect** → **past continuous**
- Need for alignment with **yesterday**

3. Presentation: time expressions & tense logic (20 minutes)

A. Time expressions that control tense

Present examples:

Time expression	Typical tense(s)	Example
yesterday / last night	Past simple	<i>I spoke to her yesterday.</i>
already / yet	Present perfect / past perfect	<i>I've already finished.</i>
by the time	Past perfect + past simple	<i>By the time he arrived, we had left.</i>
while / during	Past continuous	<i>While I was working...</i>
recently / lately	Present perfect	<i>She's recently changed jobs.</i>
beforehand / previously	Past perfect	<i>I had spoken to him beforehand.</i>

Stress: **Time expressions often “decide” the tense.**

B. Tense consistency in discourse

Explain:

- A narrative usually keeps **one main time frame**
- Shifts must be **intentional and signaled**

Example:

In 2022, I moved abroad. At first, I struggled, but eventually I adapted.

Incorrect:

In 2022, I move abroad and have struggled.

4. Controlled practice (10–15 minutes)

Activity 1: Match & choose

Students choose the correct tense:

1. By the time the meeting _____ (start), everyone _____ (already / leave).
2. While she _____ (drive), she _____ (receive) a call.
3. Recently, they _____ (decide) to change the plan.

Pair check → class feedback with explanations.

5. Noticing & analysis (10 minutes)

Activity 2: Error hunt

Provide a short advanced paragraph with **tense inconsistency errors**.

Students:

- Identify incorrect tense shifts
- Explain what time expression caused the problem
- Correct the paragraph

Focus on **reasoning**, not just correction.

6. Semi-controlled practice (15 minutes)

Activity 3: Sentence linking

Students combine ideas using a time expression:

I finished my work. The deadline arrived.

→ *By the time the deadline arrived, I had finished my work.*

Students create 4–5 sentences using different time expressions.

7. Communicative practice (20 minutes)

Activity 4: Timeline storytelling

Students tell a short story using:

- At least **5 time expressions**
- Consistent tense use throughout

Options:

A personal experience, a news-style report, a fictional event

Listeners monitor for **tense consistency**, then give feedback.

8. Error correction & refinement (5–10 minutes)

Board examples from students:

- ✗ *Last year, I have been working there for six months.*
- ✓ *Last year, I had been working there for six months.*
- ✗ *While I finished the report, he called me.*
- ✓ *While I was finishing the report, he called me.*

Highlight:

- Fixed time in the past → **past tenses only**
- Ongoing background → **continuous forms**

9. Writing extension / homework

Choose one:

1. Write a **200–250 word narrative** using at least **8 time expressions**.
2. Edit a provided text to improve tense consistency and coherence.