

## Lesson Plan: Narrative tenses in writing and storytelling

<b>Level</b>	Intermediate (B1-B2)
<b>Time</b>	60-75 minutes
<b>Skills</b>	Grammar, writing, speaking
<b>Focus</b>	Past simple, past continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous in narrative

### OBJECTIVES

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

- Use past simple, past continuous, and past perfect together in a coherent narrative
- Use past continuous to set the scene and describe background action
- Use past perfect to show that one action happened before another
- Produce a well-structured narrative using all four tenses correctly

### TARGET LANGUAGE & EXAMPLES

#### *Past simple — main events*

- She walked into the room and sat down.
- He opened the letter and read it carefully.
- → The backbone of any narrative — the sequence of completed events.

#### *Past continuous — background / interrupted action*

- The sun was shining and birds were singing.
- She was reading when the phone rang.
- → Sets the scene; describes what was in progress when the main event occurred.

#### *Past perfect — earlier past action*

- When she arrived, he had already left.
- I recognised her immediately — we had met before.
- → Makes the sequence of events clear; shows what came before the story's main timeline.

#### *Past perfect continuous — duration before a past event*

- She was exhausted — she had been working since 6 a.m.
- His hands were shaking. He had been running.
- → Explains a past state by showing what had been happening before it.

#### *Meaning & Nuance*

Tense	Function in narrative	Signal words
Past simple	main story events in sequence	then, after that, suddenly, immediately
Past continuous	scene-setting / interrupted action	while, as, when (+ past simple)
Past perfect	earlier event — happened before main story	already, by the time, when, before
Past perfect continuous	duration before a past event	for, since, all day, all morning

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### 1. Warm-up: Spot the tenses (10 min)

**Task:** Read a short story paragraph aloud. Students identify which tense is used and why.

→ Focus on the function, not just the form.

### 2. Presentation (15 min)

**Task:** Timeline approach: show how the four tenses relate to each other in a story.

- Draw a timeline: past perfect → past continuous (background) → past simple (events).
- Use a familiar story as the example: a crime scene, a trip, a meeting.

### 3. Controlled practice (15 min)

**Task:** Complete a narrative paragraph by choosing the correct tense for each verb.

- 'When I arrived, the party \_\_\_ (already/start). People \_\_\_ (dance) and \_\_\_ (laugh).'

### 4. Extended writing (25 min)

**Task:** Write a story (120-150 words) about an unexpected event using all four tenses.

- Peer review: underline each tense and check it's used correctly.
- Check: is past perfect only used when an earlier-past action needs to be shown?

## TEACHER NOTES

- The most common error: overusing past perfect. Teach: only use it when you need to show that something happened earlier than the main story timeline.
- Past continuous for scene-setting is a stylistic skill — it makes stories more vivid and is worth practising explicitly.

## EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one or more:

1. Write a narrative paragraph (100-120 words) about a memorable journey using all four tenses.
2. Take a simple 6-event story and rewrite it to show that some events happened before others.
3. Find a short story in English and label each verb with its tense and function.