

14th April 2025

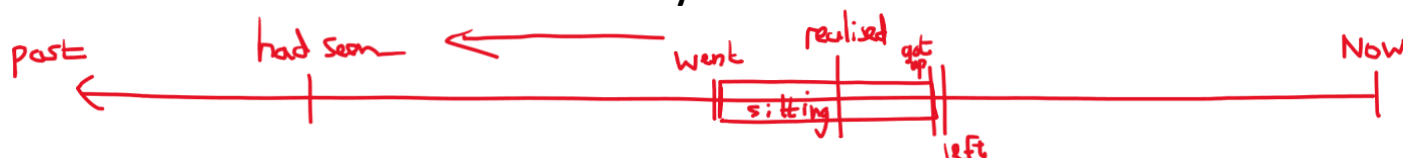
OET Writing – Narrative Tenses

Look at this anecdote:

Last week, I went to the cinema to see a film. I was sitting in the cinema when I realised that I had seen the film before. After five minutes, I got up and left.

Which tenses are used? Why?

Which time words are used in the story?



Narrative Tenses

Past Simple = verb two (past simple) / did (not) + verb one

We use it for past finished actions; consecutive actions (one after the other); with time stamps such as last..., yesterday, two days ago

Past Continuous = was / were (not) + verb + ing

We use it for longer actions that happened at/around a time in the past; with action verbs (verbs we do with the body); to 'set the scene' in narratives

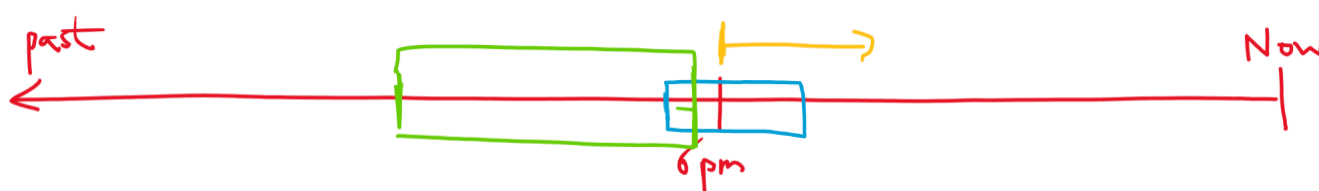
Past Perfect Simple = had (not) + verb three (past participle)

We use it for actions that happened before another past action; 'the past of the past'

Look at the three sentences below:

- I ate my dinner at 6pm
- I was eating my dinner at 6pm
- I had eaten my dinner by 6pm

When did I start and finish?



Practice:

Complete the spaces with the verbs in brackets in the past simple, past continuous or past perfect simple tense

1. The accident **happened** when they **were driving** home. (happen, drive)
2. The crowd **was cheering/cheered** when the referee **blew** the final whistle. (cheer, blow)
3. I **did not recognise** her at first because she **had changed** so much. (not recognize, change)
4. The police **stopped** her on the motorway because she **was not wearing/had not worn** a seat belt. (stop, not wear)
5. Some of the players **were not listening** while the coach **was talking** to them. (not listen, talk)
6. We **could not** use the ski slope because it **had not snowed** enough. (not can, not snow)
7. They **were not able** play tennis because they **had not booked** a court. (not able to, not book)
8. The player **got** a yellow card because he **had taken off** his shirt. (get, take off)

Extension:

We can imagine that each appointment in a patient's medical history is like a little story or anecdote

How could we tell the story of this appointment in Mr Bolsa's medical history?

27th May 2022

Visit to clinic with dizziness and nausea
Asks to change medication
Vomited twice previous week

We could write...

Mr Bolsa **visited** the clinic on 27th May 2022. He **was experiencing** dizziness and nausea and **asked** to change his medication. He **had vomited** twice the previous week.