

Hi Guys! Dan for BBC Learning English here. This time we're going to be talking about narrative tenses, which are story tenses. And we're going to try and do the whole thing in 90 seconds. Are you ready? Here we go.

So, can you see this scar? **I got this scar when I was about five or six years old.** You see, **I used to love jumping on the bed.**

I say **used to**, because **used to** is used for a past habit, which is something that we don't do any more in the present. Although, I still quite like jumping on the bed. Don't tell anybody, OK?

So, one day after **I had arrived** home from school, **I went upstairs** to jump on the bed.

Now, I say **had arrived**, because **had arrived** is the **past perfect**. And this means that the action is complete before the past simple verb. I could say, I went upstairs after **I had arrived** home. It doesn't make any difference to the meaning: the past perfect always comes first.

Now, **my mum was quite tired** because she **had been working** all day, so **she didn't see me** go upstairs.

**Had been working** is the **past perfect continuous**. It's exactly the same as the past perfect, except we use it for longer actions: she had been working all day.

Anyway, while I was jumping on the bed, my **mum came in and told me to get off.**

**While I was jumping: was jumping** is the **past continuous**. We use this for an action which is in progress at a past time. We often combine it with the past simple to give the interrupted past. While I was jumping, my mother walked in and told me to get off the bed.

So, **I decided to get off the bed.** But instead of walking off like a sensible person, **I jumped off and I went completely out of control and I bashed my head on my mother's bedside table**, giving me this scar. I was quite lucky because I could have taken out both of my eyes, and I have quite lovely eyes. BEEP. Oh, excuse me. I have quite lovely eyes. So, the moral of the story is, always listen to your mother!

Now I use the past simple to describe the main events of the story, because **the past simple is the most important tense**, and it's at the point that we want to focus on. Did you get it? Alright guys. Dan for BBC Learning English, signing off.

## Summary

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You need to use a variety of tenses in order to tell a story in an interesting and varied way. Here are some tips:

### Used to

Use **used to** to describe a past habit we don't do any more. **Used to** is always followed by an infinitive

*I **used to smoke**. (but I gave up five years ago)*

Don't forget that when you make a negative sentence or a question, you don't use a **d** at the end of **used**.

*I **didn't use** to play football*

*Did you **use** to study French at school?*

### Past Perfect

Use past perfect to describe something that happened before an action described using past simple.

*By the time she arrived home, I **had gone** to bed. (I went to bed, then she arrived home)*

Past perfect is formed using **had + past participle**.

### Past Perfect Continuous

Use past perfect continuous to describe an action which started in the past and continued up to another point in the past.

*I **had been cooking** all day for the dinner party when my guests phoned to cancel. (I started cooking and continued to cook until my guests phoned)*

Past perfect continuous is formed using **had + been + verb/ing**.

### Past Continuous

Use past continuous to describe an action which began in the past and was interrupted by another, later action in the past.

*I **was watching** a film when the doorbell rang. (I started watching a film, I continued watching a film, the doorbell rang)*

Past continuous is formed with **was/were + verb/ing**.