

## B1+ Past Tenses Guide: Telling a Clear Story

Understanding the past tenses helps you clearly sequence events in your stories. Think of them as tools for showing **when** things happened relative to each other.

### 1. Past Simple: Finished Events

The Past Simple is the foundation for telling a story. It describes actions that **started and finished at a specific time in the past**.

- **Structure:** Subject + Ved (or irregular form: *went, ate, saw*).
- **Function:** To state a completed action.
- **Example:** "I **watched** a great movie yesterday."

### 2. Past Continuous: Interrupted Actions

The Past Continuous describes a **longer, ongoing action** in the past which was suddenly broken by a shorter action.

- **Structure:** Subject + **was/were** + V-ing.
- **Function:** To show an **ongoing background action** (Past Continuous) that was stopped by an **interruption** (Past Simple).
- **Example:** "I **was cleaning** my room (long action) when my friend **called** (short interruption)."
- **Example:** "While they **were having** dinner, the lights **went** out."

### 3. Past Perfect Simple: The "Past of the Past"

The Past Perfect is used to talk about an action that happened **before another action or point in the past** (often the Past Simple).

- **Structure:** Subject + **had** + Past Participle.

Use	Explanation	Example
<b>1. Sequencing (The Earlier Action)</b>	To describe an event that happened <b>before</b> a later action in the past.	When I <b>arrived</b> (Past Simple), they <b>had already eaten</b> (Past Perfect).
<b>2. Reported Speech</b>	To report what someone said using the Past Simple or Present Perfect.	He said, "I <b>am</b> sick." → He said he <b>was</b> sick.  He said, "I <b>have finished</b> ." → He said he <b>had finished</b> .

Use	Explanation	Example
<b>3. Unreal Situations (Third Conditional)</b>	To talk about <b>hypothetical, impossible situations</b> in the past (things you regret or wish were different).	If I <b>had studied</b> (Past Perfect), I <b>would have passed</b> the test.

### Summary Table

Tense	Function	Example
<b>Past Simple</b>	Completed action at a specific past time.	She <b>left</b> an hour ago.
<b>Past Continuous</b>	Ongoing action in the past that was interrupted.	We <b>were talking</b> when the teacher arrived.
<b>Past Perfect</b>	Action finished <b>before</b> another past action.	They <b>had forgotten</b> their keys, so they couldn't enter.

### Practice Exercises

#### Exercise 1: Past Tense Fill-in-the-Blanks

**Instructions:** Read the sentences and fill the gaps with the correct form (Past Simple, Past Continuous, or Past Perfect) of the verb in parentheses.

- I realized I couldn't call him because I \_\_\_\_\_ (lose) my phone earlier that day. (Earlier Action)
- While she \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for the bus, she \_\_\_\_\_ (see) an old friend. (Ongoing action + Interruption)
- We \_\_\_\_\_ (not/think) about the mistake until the manager \_\_\_\_\_ (tell) us. (Action 1 happened before Action 2)
- If they \_\_\_\_\_ (take) the earlier train, they wouldn't have missed the concert. (Unreal Situation/Third Conditional)
- He said he \_\_\_\_\_ (finish) all his homework before the movie started. (Reported Speech - Original was Present Perfect)

## Exercise 2: Sentence Completion and Transformation

**Instructions:** Complete the sentences or choose the correct verb tense for the context.

1. We got lost because we **(didn't take / hadn't taken)** the correct bus at the station.  
(Choose the earliest action).
2. My brother \_\_\_\_\_ (Past Simple) the TV while our mom \_\_\_\_\_ (Past Continuous) in the kitchen.  
(Show an interruption).
3. Transform this direct speech: "We have bought a new house," they told me. → They told me they \_\_\_\_\_ a new house. (Reported Speech).
4. Create an Unreal Past Conditional sentence using the verbs *know* and *call*: → If I \_\_\_\_\_ your number, I \_\_\_\_\_ you.
5. What **were you doing** yesterday at 3 PM? (Answer using Past Continuous). → Yesterday at 3 PM, I \_\_\_\_\_ a book.

## Adverbs in Past Tenses

Adverbs of time, manner, and sequence help link actions together and show the pace or order of events in the past.

### Adverbs with Past Simple and Continuous

When using the Past Simple and Past Continuous to tell a story, adverbs like those below help transition between scenes, show sudden change, or describe the pace of an action.

Adverb/Phrase	Meaning	Tense Used With	Example
<b>Initially</b>	At the beginning; the first state or action.	Past Simple	<b>Initially</b> , I didn't like the new school, but that changed quickly.
<b>Gradually</b>	Slowly and steadily; little by little.	Past Continuous (to show ongoing change) or Simple	The crowd <b>gradually was growing</b> larger as the hours passed.
<b>All of a sudden</b>	Suddenly, quickly, and unexpectedly.	Past Simple (the interruption)	We were talking when, <b>all of a sudden</b> , the lights <b>went</b> out.

Adverb/Phrase Meaning	Tense Used With	Example
<b>In the end</b> Finally; the conclusion or result after a long time.	Past Simple	The trip was difficult, but <b>in the end</b> , we <b>felt</b> relieved and happy.

### Adverbs with Past Perfect

Adverbs are especially helpful with the Past Perfect to emphasize the **timing** of the earlier action relative to the later one.

Adverb/Phrase Meaning	Tense Used With	Example
<b>Meanwhile</b> At the same time; used to talk about a second ongoing action in the past, often set <i>before</i> the main action.	Past Perfect Continuous or Past Continuous	The police investigated the crime (Past Simple). <b>Meanwhile</b> , the suspect <b>had been hiding</b> in a nearby building (Past Perfect Continuous).
<i>Others:</i> <i>already, just, never, before, after</i>	Past Perfect Simple	They <b>had already finished</b> eating when I arrived.

### Practice Exercise: Sequencing with Adverbs

**Instructions:** Complete the sentences using the most appropriate adverbial phrase from the box. Use each phrase only once.

**all of a sudden, Initially, in the end, gradually, meanwhile**

- \_\_\_\_\_ the students felt nervous about the presentation, but they soon calmed down.
- The traffic was terrible. \_\_\_\_\_, people were walking to their destinations to save time.
- We were walking through the park when, \_\_\_\_\_, a dog ran past and stole our ball!
- The difficult task \_\_\_\_\_ became easier as we practiced and learned the steps.
- The project took two months to complete, but \_\_\_\_\_ the team was very proud of the result.

### Guide Summary: Be/Get Used To vs. Used To

These structures look similar but have completely different meanings and grammar rules. They cause difficulty because they sound alike, but only one is about the past.

#### 1. Be Used To (Familiarity/Habit)

This structure is an adjective phrase (where "used" functions as an adjective meaning **familiar** or **accustomed**).

Feature	Details	Example
<b>Meaning</b>	Someone is already <b>familiar</b> with a situation or activity. It describes a current state or habit.	<b>I am used to</b> the traffic in Mexico City. (It is normal for me.)
<b>Structure</b>	Be+used to+Noun / V-ing	She <b>is used to getting up</b> early.
<b>Why V-ing?</b>	The word " <b>to</b> " here is a preposition (part of the phrase <i>be used to</i> ), not an infinitive marker. Prepositions are always followed by a noun or a gerund (V-ing).	

#### 2. Get Used To (Adaptation/Process)

This structure describes the **process** of becoming familiar with something that is currently difficult or unusual.

Feature	Details	Example
<b>Meaning</b>	The process of <b>adapting</b> to things that are difficult or unusual. It describes a change in state or a challenge.	It took me a month to <b>get used to</b> the altitude here. (It was difficult, but I adapted.)
<b>Structure</b>	Get+used to+Noun / V-ing	You'll quickly <b>get used to speaking</b> English every day.
<b>Why V-ing?</b>	Just like with <i>Be Used To</i> , the " <b>to</b> " is a preposition and must be followed by a noun or gerund.	

### 3. Used To (Past Habit Only)

This structure is a modal-like verb that only refers to the past. It describes a **past habit** or a state that is **no longer true**.

Feature	Details	Example
<b>Meaning</b>	An action or state that was true in the past but <b>is not true now</b> .	I <b>used to play</b> soccer when I was younger. (I don't play now.)
<b>Structure</b>	Used to+Verb in Infinitive	We <b>used to live</b> in a different city.
<b>Why Infinitive?</b>	The " <b>to</b> " here is the standard infinitive marker, just like in <i>want to go</i> or <i>have to study</i> . It is <i>not</i> a preposition.	

Comparison	Be/Get Used To	Used To
Time	Present/Ongoing Process Past Only	
Followed By	Noun / V-ing (Gerund)	Verb in Infinitive (Base Form)
Role of "To"	Preposition	Infinitive Marker

#### Practice Exercise 1: Structure and Form

**Instructions:** Choose the correct option (A, B, or C) to complete each sentence.

- When I moved here, it took me a while to get used to \_\_\_\_\_ dinner so late. A) have B) having C) to have
- My grandfather \_\_\_\_\_ a bicycle to work every day, but now he drives. A) was used to ride B) used to ride C) is used to riding
- Even after living in the mountains for years, he's still not used to \_\_\_\_\_ the snow. A) seeing B) see C) saw
- It was difficult at first, but she is finally getting used to \_\_\_\_\_ a large team. A) manage B) managing C) managed
- I didn't like strong coffee before, but now I'm used to \_\_\_\_\_ it every morning. A) drink B) drank C) drinking

### Practice Exercise 2: Meaning and Context

**Instructions:** Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word in bold. Use between **two and five** words, including the word given.

1. I lived in a cold climate for a long time, so low temperatures are normal for me now. **AM** I \_\_\_\_\_ the cold weather now.
2. The job requires me to work long hours, and I am slowly becoming accustomed to it. **GETTING** I am slowly \_\_\_\_\_ long hours at work.
3. As a child, we often spent our summers at the beach, but we don't go anymore. **USED** We \_\_\_\_\_ our summers at the beach.
4. It's very difficult for her to speak in public, but she needs to adapt to it for her new role. **GET** She needs to \_\_\_\_\_ speaking in public.
5. I found the noise from the street annoying, but now it doesn't bother me. **AM** I \_\_\_\_\_ the street noise now.

### Vocabulary

**Instructions:** Read the text below about technology and nature. Use the words from the box to complete the sentences. You will not use all the words, and you may need to change the form of some of them (e.g., noun to adjective).

**predictable, approved, imitate, newborn, savannah, whistle, investor,**

**database, scheme, encrypt, decrypt, install, back up (verb), back up (noun)**

#### A Tale of Codes and Clicks

The new tech startup had a (1) \_\_\_\_\_ for creating a secure messaging app. First, they needed a large sum of money, so they searched for a major (2) \_\_\_\_\_ willing to fund the project. Their main goal was security: when a user sent a message, the system would (3) \_\_\_\_\_ the information, turning it into a secret code. Only the recipient could (4) \_\_\_\_\_ the message on their device. This level of security was essential, as many other companies tried to (5) \_\_\_\_\_ successful apps.

To manage all the user account information, they built a massive (6) \_\_\_\_\_. They also made it (7) \_\_\_\_\_ that users should frequently (8) \_\_\_\_\_ their files, just in case their phone broke. After months of testing, the final version of the app was (9) \_\_\_\_\_ by the company board. Soon, millions of people were able to (10) \_\_\_\_\_ the software on their phones.

### Practice Exercise 1: Definitions and Meanings

**Instructions:** Match the vocabulary word (1-5) with its correct definition (A-E).

Word		Definition
1. predictable	_____	a) To put a program onto a computer.
2. newborn	_____	b) A person or company that buys something in order to make a profit.
3. install	_____	c) Likely to happen; not surprising.
4 investor	_____	d) To make a noise by blowing air through your lips.
5. whistle	_____	e) A baby which has recently been born.

### Practice Exercise 2: Application

**Instructions:** Complete the sentences using the most appropriate word from the box. You may need to change the word's form.

savannah, encrypt, decrypt, back up (noun), scheme, approved

1. Before sharing sensitive documents, you must \_\_\_\_\_ them so they are unreadable to hackers.
2. The school board hasn't yet \_\_\_\_\_ the proposed timetable change for next semester.
3. The lion cub, along with its mother, walked slowly across the wide open \_\_\_\_\_.
4. If your computer crashes, you'll be glad you made a \_\_\_\_\_ of all your important work.
5. The government introduced a new \_\_\_\_\_ to reduce energy consumption in the city.