

B1 —

Talking about the news in the past

Focus: Past simple, past continuous (progressive),
and past perfect simple tense aspects

Warm-up questions



1. What is a piece of news you heard recently?
2. Has anything surprising happened in your city or country lately?
3. Do you prefer reading news or watching it? Why?
4. What kind of news do you usually follow?
5. When was the last time you told someone about something that happened?

Grammar guide: the past simple

The past simple

Used for **completed actions** in the past.

- Yesterday, last week, in 2018, two days ago

Form:

- Regular: *verb + -ed*
- Irregular: *second column form (went, saw, took)*

Examples:

- *The storm **hit** the town last night.*
- *Police **found** the missing phone.*



Grammar guide: the past continuous

The past continuous

Used for **longer actions** or **background actions**, often interrupted by another event.

Form:

- *Subject + was/were + verb + -ing*

Examples:

- Background: *People **were waiting** outside.*
- Interrupted action: *I **was watching** the news when the power **went** out.*



Grammar guide: the past perfect simple

The past perfect simple

Used for an action that happened before another past action.

Form:

- *Subject + had + past participle*

Examples:

- *By the time the firefighters arrived, the fire **had spread**.*
- *She was tired because she **had worked** all night.*



Timeline overview

Past perfect simple	Past continuous (background)	Past simple (main event)
<i>[had happened]</i>	<i>[was/were + -ing]</i>	<i>[happened]</i>

Useful time phrases:

- **Past simple:** yesterday, last night, two days ago
- **Past continuous:** while, when
- **Past perfect simple:** by the time, already, before, after, earlier that day

Unexpected Power Cut in Greenview District

Yesterday evening, many residents in Greenview experienced an unexpected power cut. The outage started at around 7:15 p.m. while people were preparing dinner. Earlier that day, technicians had repaired a faulty cable, but they didn't realise that another part of the system had been damaged as well.

By the time the repair team returned, several streets had already lost electricity. Residents waited for almost two hours before the power finally came back on.

Comprehension questions *(based on story)*



1. When did the power cut start?
2. What were people doing when the outage happened?
3. What had technicians done earlier that day?
4. Why did the problem happen again?
5. How long did residents wait for electricity?



HearSay Learn audio activities

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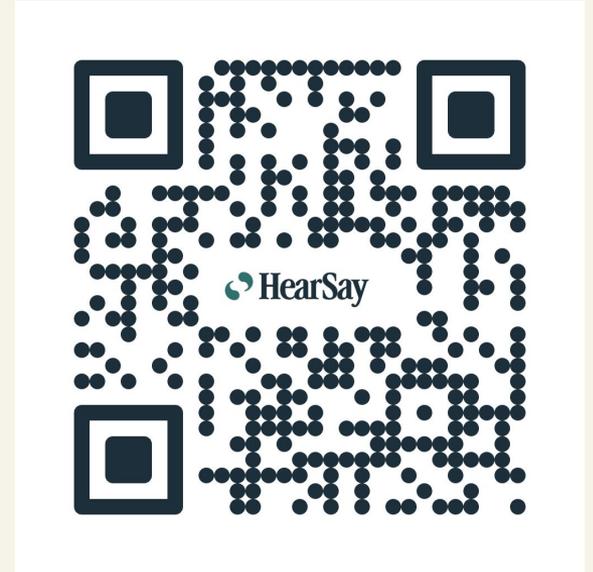
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“The minister’s resignation”



[Click here to listen to the conversation between Chloe and Mark](#) (or scan the QR code, above)

*** **British accent**



Comprehension (*HearSay Learn audio*)

1. What was Mark doing when the news story broke?
2. What had the minister been doing all morning before the resignation?
3. Why were the police involved in the situation?
4. What had investigators confirmed by the time the press arrived?
5. What happened while half the team was travelling to the office?
6. How did the minister appear when he finally spoke to reporters?
7. What does Mark think the minister realised before the cameras started rolling?





Gap-fill activity (*HearSay Learn audio*)

Complete the dialogue with the correct past simple, past continuous, or past perfect form of the verbs in brackets.

1. Mark: “Yeah, but I ___ (cook) when it ___ (break). What had actually ___ (happen) before the announcement?”
2. Chloe: “He ___ (deny) the leak all morning, but the police ___ (investigate) a separate file.”
3. Chloe: “By the time the press arrived, the investigators ___ (confirm) that the documents were real.”
4. Mark: “So the whole thing ___ (blow up) while half the team ___ (travel) to the office.”
5. Chloe: “Reporters said he ___ (shake) during the entire speech.”
6. Mark: “He probably ___ (realise) everything ___ (go) wrong long before the cameras were on.”



Multiple-choice (*HearSay Learn audio*)

Choose the correct answers (a, b, or c).

1. **What had the investigators done before the press arrived?**
 - a. They were confirming the documents
 - b. They had confirmed the documents
 - c. They confirmed the documents later
2. **What was Mark doing when the news story broke?**
 - a. He was cooking
 - b. He cooked dinner
 - c. He had cooked earlier
3. **What had the minister been doing all morning?**
 - a. Denying the leak
 - b. Investigating the leak
 - c. Preparing his speech
4. **What happened while half the team was travelling to the office?**
 - a. Nothing important occurred
 - b. The entire scandal blew up
 - c. The minister had resigned hours before

Gap-fill activity — Mixed past tenses



Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. The police ___ (arrive) after the thief ___ (escape).
2. I ___ (walk) to the shop when it suddenly ___ (start) raining.
3. She ___ (not finish) her report before the meeting ___ (begin).
4. They ___ (watch) the match when the lights ___ (go off).
5. By the time I got home, my brother ___ (cook) dinner already.

Sentence transformations

Rewrite the sentences using the correct past tense.

1. First she called the police. Then she found the wallet.
→ She ...
2. I was having lunch. My friend texted me.
→ I ...
3. The bus left. Then I arrived at the station.
→ By the time ...



Speaking practice

Use past simple, past continuous, and past perfect to tell a mini-story:

Prompts:

- A strange event that happened during your day
- A news story you heard this week
- A problem that happened while you were doing something
- A time when something unexpected changed your plans

Please try to use time phrases like: *while, when, earlier that day, by the time, already, before.*



Thank you for your support.

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