



So the story goes

Wenn Sie eine Geschichte erzählen, müssen Sie die grammatikalischen Zeiten sorgfältig auswählen. **VANESSA CLARK** hat für Sie eine Erzählung geschrieben, anhand derer sie erklärt, welche Zeitformen sich für welche Zwecke anbieten. medium



We all tell stories. We don't always write them down, but we tell each other what happened at work, on holiday or when we were younger.

Whether our stories are spoken or written, they use the same range of grammatical structures. The vocabulary changes, but the structure of the story will need the same group of verb tenses.

Here, we explore these tenses and show you how you can use them to make the sequence of time clear in your story, as well as adding other elements, such as atmosphere and description.

Read a specially written story, "Waiting for Archie" by Vanessa Clark, and follow her notes as she explains which tenses she has chosen in each section of the story.



Waiting for Archie

Chapter 1

At the airport, Ken chose a table in a cafe with a good view of the arrivals hall. He sat down and ordered a coffee. He opened a packet of cigarettes, then closed it again and cursed the smoking ban for the hundredth time that day. He threw the packet down on the table and turned his chair so that he could watch the passengers arriving.

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When we tell a story about something that happened in the past, we usually tell it in the past. In the past, the most important tense is the **past simple**: **It happened** (verb + **-ed**, or **irregular form**). We use the past simple to describe what happened — the **action**.

This paragraph tells us eight things that Ken did. Circle the eight verbs in the past simple. The first one has been done for you.

It was busy at the arrivals gate. Taxi drivers were standing in a line, holding up their signs with customers' names on them. Two teenage girls were carrying a "Welcome home, Mum!" sign and were looking for their mother in the crowd. A nervous young man was walking up and down, checking his watch every few minutes.

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You can tell a simple story with the past simple, but if you want to make your story more interesting, you'll need a few more tenses. You can use the **past continuous**: **It was happening** (was/were + verb + **-ing**) to give your story **background** and to **create atmosphere**.



The scene above takes place at a busy airport. We read about three different kinds of people: the taxi drivers, two teenage girls and a nervous young man.

Notice how you can combine two past continuous verbs into one sentence without repeating the **was** or **were**:

- They **were standing** in a line, **holding** up their signs.

What two things were they each doing? Fill the gaps in the sentences below.

Combine each of these pairs of sentences into one.

- a) Taxi drivers:
They _____ in a line.
They _____ up their signs.
- b) Girls: They _____ a sign.
They _____ for their mother.
- c) Man: He _____ up and down.
He _____ his watch.

- d) A girl was sitting on the floor. She was playing with her teddy bear.

- e) A woman was standing at a kiosk. She was looking at a magazine.

ban [bæn]	Verbot
curse sth. [kɜːs]	etw. verfluchen