

# Intro to 'Tense English Stories'

Here are some simple stories that can be used to help students practice hearing, understanding, reading, and using different English verb tenses.

## Suggestions for Use

1. Tell the students what verb tenses to listen for in the story. Tell them the story aloud, then ask them the questions. Encourage them to answer in complete sentences using the same tenses that are used in the story.
2. Tell the students what verb tenses to listen for in the story. Tell them the story aloud while they are reading along. Then ask them to answer the questions verbally and/or write their answers. Encourage them to answer in complete sentences using the same tenses that are used in the story.
3. For a second read-through of a story: Remind the students what verb tenses to listen for. Read each sentence of the story aloud, pausing after each sentence to ask the students what verb tense was used in that sentence.
4. Tell the students what verb tenses to look for in the story. Give them colored pencils, markers, or highlighters of various colors. Let them know which color represents each tense. Have them read the story individually or in pairs/teams, marking each sentence with the appropriate color based on its verb tense.

## The Stories

*(listed from most simple to most complex)*

- **Jana Goes to School** - uses simple present and present continuous tenses
- **Anna Missed the Bus** - uses simple past and past continuous tenses
- **Belinda Will Go on Vacation** - uses simple future and future continuous tenses
- **What happened to Billy?** - uses simple present, present continuous, simple past, and past continuous tenses
- **Changes in Town** - uses simple present, present continuous, simple past, past continuous, simple future, and future continuous tenses

# Verb Tenses in English

## Present Tense

There are four main types of present tense in English:

1. the **simple present** tense is the most common present tense. It describes actions happening now or actions that happen regularly:  
She **walks** slowly. I **walk** to school every day. He **is** tall.
2. the **present continuous** tense describes actions that are happening around (and including) the time when you are speaking:  
I **am walking** to the store now.
3. the **present perfect** tense describes an activity that, as of right now, has been completed or has ended. The exact time when the action happened is not important, so it is ignored for this tense:  
I **have seen** her before. I **have lived** in a lot of places.
4. the **present perfect continuous** tense describes an action that started in the past and has been ongoing without stopping up to the present time. The duration of the action is usually mentioned in this tense:  
I **have been living** in McKinney for eight years.

## Special Note on Present Continuous

Note that **present continuous** tense statements like 'I am going to school' can be used in present *and* future contexts, or to describe a trend.

### Present Context

- I **am going** to school. (I am on my way to school as I say this.)
- I'm leaving. (I **am leaving** right now.)

### Future Context

- I am going to school every day next week. (I **will go** to school every day next week.)
- I'm going to the beach tomorrow. (I **will go** to the beach tomorrow.)

## Describing a Trend

- More and more people **are becoming** vegetarians.

# Past Tense

There are four main types of past tense in English:

1. the **simple past** tense describes an activity that took place (was completed) in the past:  
I **walked** to school yesterday.
2. the **past continuous** tense describes an activity that was ongoing in the past at the time you are talking about:  
I **was walking** to school when I started to feel sick.
3. the **past perfect** tense describes an activity that was completed in the past before the time you are talking about:  
I **had walked** down that same road the day before.
4. the **past perfect continuous** tense describes an activity that started before the time you are talking about, but *had not been completed*, meaning that it *continued* at least up until the time you are talking about:  
I **had been walking** for an hour when I realized that I was lost.  
I **had been eating** for a while when they arrived.

# Future Tense

There are four main types of future tense in English:

1. the **simple future** tense describes an activity that you will *complete* in the future:  
I **will eat** some sushi when I'm on vacation.
2. the **future continuous** tense describes an activity that will be *ongoing* at the point you're talking about in the future:  
I **will be eating** sushi tonight when you call me.
3. the **future perfect** tense describes an activity that will be *complete* by the specific time you are talking about:  
I **will have eaten** by the time you get here.
4. the **future perfect continuous** tense describes an action or activity that will be in progress but *not completed* by the time some *other* action takes place in the future:  
I **will have been eating** for a while by the time she gets there.

# Jana Goes to School

## Present Tense

This story uses only two types of present tense:

1. the **simple present** tense is the most common present tense. It describes actions happening now or actions that happen regularly:  
She **walks** slowly. I **walk** to school every day. He **is** tall.
2. the **present continuous** tense describes actions that are happening around (and including) the time when you are speaking:  
I **am walking** to the store now.

## Story

Jana goes to school on weekdays. She always wears her school uniform. All of the students at Jana's school wear school uniforms. Sometimes the uniforms make it difficult for Jana to find her friends. The uniforms make everyone look similar from a distance.

Jana knows that she can recognize her friends by looking for certain things that are not part of their uniforms. Her friend Anna has long, blond hair. Her friend Charlie has short, brown hair. Her friend Melissa always wears a blue hat. Her friend Willa often wears a bow in her hair.

Jana does not go to school on weekends. Jana likes to visit her friends on Saturdays. Sometimes all of Jana's friends gather at her house on a Saturday. They like to play board games and watch movies. Sometimes they try to make an interesting new dish for lunch. Sometimes they go shopping together. If the weather is nice, they like to play outside. If the weather is bad, one of their favorite indoor games to play is 'Hide and Seek'.

On weekends they do not wear their school uniforms. Jana finds it much easier to recognize her friends on weekends. Willa likes to wear dresses. Charlie and Anna wear jeans when they are not in school. Melissa always wears something blue.

Jana loves spending time with her friends at school and on weekends. Her friends are fun to be around, and they are always coming up with great ideas for fun things to do.

# Questions

*Try to answer questions with complete sentences.*

*Example: When does Jana go to school? Don't just answer 'Weekdays'.*

*Answer with a complete sentence, preferably in present tense: 'Jana goes to school on weekdays.'*

1. When does Jana go to school?
2. What days are weekdays?
3. What days are weekend days?
4. How does Jana recognize her friend Willa at school?
5. How does Jana recognize her friend Charlie at school?
6. How does Jana recognize her friend Melissa on weekends?
7. What kind of hair does Anna have?
8. What kind of games do Jana and her friends play on Saturdays?
9. What are some other things Jana and her friends like to do on the weekend?
10. What do Jana's friends wear at school?

# Anna Missed the Bus

## Past Tense

This story uses only two types of past tense:

1. the **simple past** tense describes an activity that took place (was completed) in the past:  
I **walked** to school yesterday.
2. the **past continuous** tense describes an activity that was ongoing in the past at the time you are talking about:  
I **was walking** to school when I started to feel sick.

## Story

On Tuesday, Anna missed the school bus. Anna had very long blond hair. She was drying her hair and brushing her hair for a long time that day, and she lost track of time. When she looked at the clock, she saw that she had only five minutes to get to the bus stop.

Anna jumped up and grabbed her backpack. She ran into the kitchen and kissed her mother goodbye. Her mother told her to have a good day. Then Anna ran out the door and ran to the bus stop as fast as she could.

She was running faster than she had ever run before! She was running so fast that she almost tripped and fell. Anna decided to slow down a little. She didn't want to fall.

Anna arrived at the bus stop and saw that the bus was not there. Then she saw it way down the street. It was driving away from her. The bus was already gone.

Anna walked back home. She knew her mother would still be eating her breakfast. Anna needed a ride to school. She decided to ask her mother to drive her to school.

Her mother was surprised to see Anna return home so soon. Anna explained the situation and asked her mother to drive her to school. Her mother was happy to drive her. Surprisingly, Anna was not even late for school that day! Anna's mother suggested that Anna pay a little more attention to her clock on school days.

# Questions

*Students should answer questions with complete sentences.*

*Example: What day was it when Anna missed the bus? Don't just answer 'Tuesday'. Answer with a complete sentence, preferably in past tense: 'She missed the bus on Tuesday.'*

1. What day was it when Anna missed the bus?
2. Why did she miss the bus?
3. What did she look at that told her she was late?
4. What did Anna grab before she went to the kitchen?
5. Who did she see in the kitchen?
6. How did Anna get to the bus stop?
7. What almost happened on the way to the bus stop?
8. Did Anna make it to the bus stop in time?
9. Did Anna walk or run back home?
10. Who do you think gave Anna a ride to school that day?

# Belinda Will Go on Vacation

## Future Tense

This story uses only two types of future tense:

1. the **simple future** tense describes an activity that you will *complete* in the future:  
I **will eat** some sushi when I'm on vacation.
2. the **future continuous** tense describes an activity that will be *ongoing* at the point you're talking about in the future:  
I **will be eating** sushi tonight when you call me.

## Story

Belinda will go on vacation next month. Belinda will plan her vacation very carefully. She will try not to miss any of her favorite activities. She will try to include her family members in everything she does.

Belinda will be going to her favorite vacation spot: Balaton! Her family loves to go there every Summer.

She will go swimming on the first day she is there. If the weather is bad, she will stay indoors and play games with her brothers. Her family will bring a lot of games with them so they will always have something to do, even if the weather is bad.

Belinda will go to her favorite restaurant for dinner on the day they arrive. She will be eating her favorite kind of food—seafood—for a long time with her family that night.

She will go fishing with her father on their second day there. Her father will rent a boat and they will go fishing for the whole day. Belinda's brothers will not go fishing. They will go swimming all day with their mother.

Belinda and her family will spend five days at the lake. They will be enjoying themselves a lot that week!

They will drive home at the end of the week. On their way home they will stop and get their dog from their friend Mary's house. Mary will be taking care of their dog while they are at Balaton.



# Questions

*Try to answer the questions with complete sentences.*

*Example: What will Belinda plan for? Don't just answer 'Her trip'. Answer with a complete sentence, preferably in future tense: 'She will plan her trip to Balaton.'*

1. What will Belinda plan for?
2. What will Belinda try not to miss?
3. Where will Belinda and her family go?
4. What kinds of things will they do there?
5. What kind of food will they eat on the first night?
6. What will Belinda do with her father on their second day there?
7. How many days will the family be at the lake?
8. How will they get home after their vacation?
9. Who will they pick up on their way home?
10. Who will be watching their dog while they are away?

# What Happened to Billy?

## Tenses Used in This Story

This story uses two types of present tense and two types of past tense:

1. the **simple present** tense is the most common present tense. It describes actions happening now or actions that happen regularly:  
She **walks** slowly. I **walk** to school every day. He **is** tall.
2. the **present continuous** tense describes actions that are happening around (and including) the time when you are speaking:  
I **am walking** to the store now.
3. the **simple past** tense describes an activity that took place (was completed) in the past:  
I **walked** to school yesterday.
4. the **past continuous** tense describes an activity that was ongoing in the past at the time you are talking about:  
I **was walking** to school when I started to feel sick.

## Story

"What happened to Billy?" Maria asked her friend Belinda.

"What are you talking about?" Belinda asked Maria.

"Billy was not at school today," Maria explained. "No one told me why he wasn't there."

"I don't know," Belinda said. "Was he at school yesterday?"

"He was there, but he looked a little sick," Maria said. "He was probably sick today."

"I'm calling him right now," said Belinda as she pulled out her phone and tapped on its screen.

The two girls waited. Soon they heard Billy's voice.

"Hello," Billy said. "How are you, Belinda?"

"I'm fine," Belinda said. "Are you sick? You weren't at school today."

"I'm not sick," Billy said, "but I did have an accident. I broke a bone in my foot. I was walking on top of a concrete wall near my house and I fell."

"Oh no," Belinda said. "Did you go to the doctor?"

"I did," Billy said. "She said that it's a small break. She wrapped my foot in something to keep it safe. She said I can go to school tomorrow if I'm careful."

"That's great news!" Belinda said.

"I am eating dinner," Billy said. "I have to go."

"Okay," Belinda said. "Bye."

The two girls were glad that Billy was okay.

## Questions

*Try to answer the questions with complete sentences.*

*Example: Who was not at school? Don't just answer 'Billy'. Answer with a complete sentence: 'Billy was not at school that day.'*

1. Who was not at school?
2. Who noticed that he was not at school?
3. Who didn't notice that he was not at school?
4. Why did Maria think that Billy was not at school?
5. Who called Billy?
6. What happened to Billy?
7. Who did Billy go see after his accident?
8. What did the doctor do?
9. What did the doctor say about Billy going to school the next day?
10. What was Billy doing when his friends called him?

# Changes in Town

This story uses two types of present tense, two types of past tense, and two types of future tense:

1. the **simple present** tense is the most common present tense. It describes actions happening now or actions that happen regularly:  
She **walks** slowly. I **walk** to school every day. He **is** tall.
2. the **present continuous** tense describes actions that are happening around (and including) the time when you are speaking:  
I **am walking** to the store now.
3. the **simple past** tense describes an activity that took place (was completed) in the past:  
I **walked** to school yesterday.
4. the **past continuous** tense describes an activity that was ongoing in the past at the time you are talking about:  
I **was walking** to school when I started to feel sick.
5. the **simple future** tense describes an activity that you will *complete* in the future:  
I **will eat** some sushi when I'm on vacation.
6. the **future continuous** tense describes an activity that will be *ongoing* at the point you're talking about in the future:  
I **will be eating** sushi tonight when you call me.

## Special Note on Present Continuous

**Present continuous** tense statements like 'I am going to school' can be used in present *and* future contexts, or to describe a trend.

### Present Context

- I **am going** to school. (I am on my way to school as I say this.)

### Future Context

- I'm going to the beach tomorrow. (I **will go** to the beach tomorrow.)

### Describing a Trend

- More and more people **are becoming** vegetarians.

# Story

Anna's mother was furious. "There are too many changes happening in our town!" she said angrily.

"What do you mean?" Anna asked her. The two of them were having lunch in a restaurant in their town. They were sitting near a window.

Anna's mother pointed out the window. "They are building another apartment building. Our town has too many of those already."

"People need places to live," Anna said.

"That is true," her mother agreed. "But I think the town looks nicer when they build more houses."

"Houses are bigger and more expensive," Anna said. "Some people like apartments better."

"Is that your friend Belinda?" Anna's mother asked her.

"Hi, Belinda!" Anna called out to her friend.

"Hi, Anna!" Belinda said. "Did you already eat?"

"Yes," Anna said. "I had a soup and a salad for lunch. We will be shopping for the rest of the day."

"That sounds great!" Belinda said. "What kind of soup did you have?"

"I had the cheese soup," Anna said. "It was great."

"I will have that for my lunch," Belinda said. "Did you see the new apartments? They are building them so quickly. Soon they will be finished! My parents and I are so excited."

"Why are you excited?" Anna asked.

"We will be moving into one of those apartments when they are ready," Belinda said. "We will finally have a place to live that is just the right size for our small family."

"That is wonderful news," Anna's mother said to Belinda.

Anna smiled at her mother. Anna was right. The new apartments were going to be just perfect for some of the families in their town.

# Questions

*Try to answer the questions with complete sentences.*

*Example: Who was eating lunch with Anna? Don't just answer 'Her mother'.*

*Answer with a complete sentence: 'Anna was eating lunch with her mother.'*

1. Who was eating lunch with Anna?
2. Where were they eating lunch?
3. What did they see from where they were sitting?
4. What did Anna's mother think about the new apartment building?
5. What does Anna think about apartments?
6. Who came into the restaurant?
7. What did Anna have for lunch?
8. What will Belinda have for lunch?
9. Who will be moving into one of the new apartments?
10. Why will they move into one of the new apartments?