

It was late in the evening when I looked out of my bedroom window. The sun was setting and the moon had appeared. For over an hour, a black crow had been sitting on the tree at the end of our garden. It had been looking into the trees when suddenly it turned and looked in my direction. In fact, it was staring straight at me.



Presentation

We use several different tenses when we narrate a story in the past.

Use the past simple:

- to describe the main events in sequence, i.e. one event after another.
*I **opened** the curtains, **looked** out of the window, and **saw** a crow.*
- to describe a general state in the past. *It **was** one of the coldest winters in memory.*

Use the past perfect:

- to make it clear that one past event happened before another one.
*When I looked again, the bird **had flown** away.*
- to describe something that happened (or a state that was true) before the main event(s) or story. *I'd **often walked** past the old house but I'd **never entered** it.*

Use the **past continuous** to describe an activity in progress in the past. It can be:

- the background to an event within the story. *The sun **was setting**.*
- the background to the main story. *It was late at night and I **was sleeping**.*

Use the **past perfect continuous** to describe a longer activity in progress in the past:

- before a main event: *The sky **had been getting** blacker ...*
- up to a main event: *A black crow **had been sitting** on the tree when suddenly it turned to look at me.*

Exercises

1 Match the two halves of the sentences. Then write the names of the tenses in bold.

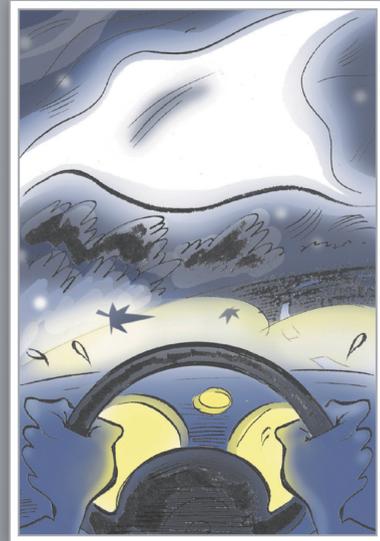
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|---|-----------------------|---|
| 1 He walked into the house | <u>G, past simple</u> | A in living memory. |
| 2 It had been raining for six hours | | B when the phone rang. |
| 3 The party had already ended | | C by the time we arrived. |
| 4 She was falling asleep | | D and the whole of my garden was under water! |
| 5 It was the hottest summer | | E the rain started to fall. |
| 6 I'd always wanted to appear on TV | | F and now was my big chance. |
| 7 The clouds were gathering and | | G and closed the door behind him. |

2 Choose the correct option to complete the text below.

The strange story of a tree in the night...

Do you believe in ghosts? I ¹*thought* / *'ve been thinking* about this question a lot recently. I ²*'d never met* / *'ve never met* a ghost, but a friend of mine has. And her story has made me think again about my answer to the question.

It ³*had been* / *was* a dark, foggy night – as it often is, of course, in all good ghost stories – and my friend ⁴*was driving* / *drove* home along a quiet country road. Suddenly, a large white shadow ⁵*was flying* / *flew* across the road in front of her car. My friend slowed down and ⁶*had been looking* / *looked* behind her in her mirror. But there was nothing there. The strange white shadow ⁷*had disappeared* / *was disappearing*. She drove on a bit further, when the shadow ⁸*was appearing* / *appeared* again. This time it flew straight at her windshield and blocked her view. She stopped the car. And at that very moment she heard a loud crashing sound just in front of her. She looked up. There, in the middle of the road, ⁹*was being* / *was* a huge tree. It ¹⁰*had been falling* / *had fallen* down into the middle of the road. My friend was shaking with shock. Had the strange white shadow ¹¹*been trying* / *tried* to warn her of the danger? ¹²*It had saved* / *Had it saved* her life?



3 Complete the story using past forms. Sometimes more than one form is possible.

It was 8 o'clock and at last I was ready. I ¹..... (spend) hours deciding what to wear. This was a special occasion and I ²..... (want) to look my best. I ³..... (walk) to the bus stop when a friend ⁴..... (pass) me in his car. He ⁵..... (drive) into town. He ⁶..... (offer) to give me a lift. We ⁷..... (stop) the car opposite the restaurant. I could see the people inside. They ⁸..... (already / start) eating. As I waited on the pavement, a huge lorry ⁹..... (drive) straight through a big puddle of water. My dress was covered in mud. I ¹⁰..... (look) a real mess. All the customers in the restaurant ¹¹..... (laugh) at me. I ¹²..... (never / feel) so embarrassed in my whole life.