

How to tell a story

In this lesson you will learn expressions for telling and listening to anecdotes.

Starter

- Put the lines in the correct order to make an anecdote. The first line is done for you.
 - _____ whose name I didn't catch.
 - _____ because I thought he was an assistant.
 - _____ It was about a month later.
 - _____ 1 On my first day at work.
 - _____ including a guy doing some photocopying.
 - _____ the 'photocopying guy' kept saying hello.
 - _____ Afterwards, whenever I saw him.
 - _____ I was introduced to lots of people.
 - _____ when I realized he was the CEO!
 - _____ I didn't pay too much attention at the time.
- Can you remember your first day in your current job? What was it like? Did anything unusual happen?

Expressions

- Listen to three colleagues talking about their first day at work and decide whether the following sentences are true (T) or false (F).
 - Roberto's story took place when he was a student. _____
 - Roberto deliberately threw a drink over the owner's son. _____
 - The owner's son was very angry. _____
 - Linda quickly found a job in the legal industry. _____
 - She had to take some files into court. _____
 - The shredder caught fire. _____
- Which situation do you think was the most embarrassing and why?
- The listeners to the anecdotes used some expressions to show interest. Which two of the following didn't they say? Listen again to check your answers.
 - How come? • You must be joking!
 - That's great! • What a nightmare!
 - No wonder! • How embarrassing!
 - Go on! • What happened next?
 - Shame!

Speaking

- Use the prompts below to tell your teacher a story. Try to use language from Expressions and the Language box.
 - job interview
 - prepare by learning about company / buying a new shirt
 - take wrong bus
 - take another bus
 - arrive late
 - interviewer friendly
 - interviewer seems to like shirt because looks at it often
 - interview goes well
 - go home after interview
 - see a large coffee stain on front of shirt

Language box

The past simple describes completed actions in the past and past states:

We had to make twenty people redundant last year.

Our previous factory was really old-fashioned.

When telling a story we use the past simple to show a sequence of events which happened one after the other:

I took a deep breath, smiled at the audience, and started to speak.

The past continuous describes actions in progress at a particular time in the past:

In the early 90s I was studying economics at university.

4 Match the expressions used by the storytellers to their functions.

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|-------------------------------|--|
| I'll never forget ... | showing that something was an accident |
| To cut a long story short ... | introducing an anecdote |
| I didn't do it on purpose. | introducing the final (and worst) event |
| It wasn't my fault. | introducing an obvious statement |
| Needless to say ... | blaming someone else |
| That wasn't the worst of it. | introducing something new and surprising |
| Little did I know ... | introducing a summary |
| To top it all ... | introducing something even worse |



Hint

When telling stories we can use the present simple and present continuous tenses in order to make the story more lively and dramatic:

So, I'm sitting at my desk, writing an email, when suddenly I hear this huge bang and all the lights go out!

Writing

- 1 Write an email to a friend telling them about the bad day you had at work yesterday. Use the pictures to help you write your story and try to use language from Expressions and the Language box.



Look

Look at listening script 23.1 on page 131. Find more examples of past tenses.

We use the past continuous with *when*, *while*, and *as* together with the present simple to show that one event happened while another was in progress:

My boss walked in as I was talking about him to my colleague.

While our company was expanding we took on several new employees.

The past perfect shows that an action took place before something else in the past:

When we arrived, the meeting had already started.

The past perfect continuous describes actions in progress before another event in the past:

Security was improved because a member of staff had been stealing company products.

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

- 1
2
3

3 useful phrases from this lesson

- 1
2
3

Things to remember

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