

By and until By the time . . .

A

By (+ a time) = "no later than":

- I mailed the letter today, so they should receive it **by Monday**. (= on or before Monday, no later than Monday)
- We'd better hurry. We have to be home **by 5:00**. (= at or before 5:00, no later than 5:00)
- Where's Sue? She should be here **by now**. (= now or before now – so she should have arrived already)

You cannot use **until** with this meaning:

- Tell me **by Friday** whether or not you can come to the party. (*not* Tell me **until Friday**)



This cheese should be sold by August 14.

B

We use **until** (*or till*) to say how long a situation continues:

- "Should we go now?" "No, let's wait **until** (*or till*) it stops raining."
- I couldn't get up this morning. { I stayed in bed **until** half past ten.
I didn't get up **until** half past ten.

Compare **until** and **by**:

until

Something *continues* **until** a time in the future:

- Fred will be away **until** Monday. (so he'll be back on Monday)
- I'll be working **until** 11:30. (so I'll stop working at 11:30)

by

Something *happens* **by** a time in the future:

- Fred will be back **by** Monday. (= he'll be back no later than Monday)
- I'll have finished my work **by** 11:30. (I'll finish my work no later than 11:30)

C

You can say "by the time something happens." Study these examples:

- (*from a letter*) I'm flying to Mexico this evening. So **by the time** you receive this letter, I'll be in Mexico City. (= I will arrive in Mexico City between now and the time you receive this letter.)
- Hurry up! **By the time** we get to the theater, the play will already have started.

You can say "by the time something happened" (for the past):

- Jane's car broke down on the way to the party last night. **By the time** she arrived, most of the other guests had left. (= It took her a long time to get to the party, and most of the guests went home during this time.)
- I had a lot of work to do yesterday evening. I was very tired **by the time** I finished. (= It took me a long time to do the work, and I became more and more tired during this time.)
- We went to the theater last night. It took us a long time to find somewhere to park the car. **By the time** we got to the theater, the play had already started.

Also **by then** or **by that time**:

- Jane finally arrived at the party at midnight, but **by then** (*or by that time*), most of the guests had left.

Exercises

116.1 Make sentences with *by*.

1. I have to be home no later than 5:00. *I have to be home by 5:00.*
2. I have to be at the airport no later than 10:30. I have to be at the airport _____.
3. Let me know no later than Saturday whether you can come to the party.
Let me know _____.
4. Please make sure that you're here no later than 2:00.
Please _____.
5. If we leave now, we should arrive no later than lunchtime.
_____.

116.2 Put in *by* or *until*.

1. Fred has gone out of town. He'll be out of town *until* _____ Monday.
2. Sorry, but I have to go. I have to be home *by* _____ 5:00.
3. I've been offered a job. I haven't decided yet whether to accept it or not. I have to decide _____ Thursday.
4. I think I'll wait _____ Thursday before making a decision.
5. It's too late to go shopping. The stores are only open _____ 5:30. They'll be closed _____ now.
6. I'd better pay the phone bill. It has to be paid _____ tomorrow.
7. Don't pay the bill today. Wait _____ tomorrow.
8. A: Have you finished painting your house?
B: Not yet. We hope to finish _____ the end of the week.
9. A: I'm going out now. I'll be back at 4:30. Will you still be here?
B: I don't think so. I'll probably have left _____ then.
10. I'm moving into my new apartment next week. I'm staying with a friend _____ then.
11. I've got a lot of work to do. _____ the time I finish, it will be time to go to bed.
12. If you want to take the exam, you should register _____ April 3rd.

116.3 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use *by* or *until*.

1. Fred is out of town at the moment. He'll be out of town *until Monday* _____.
2. Fred is out of town at the moment. He'll be back *by Monday* _____.
3. I'm going out. I won't be very long. Wait here _____.
4. I'm going shopping. It's 4:30 now. I won't be very long. I'll be back _____.
5. If you want to apply for the job, your application must be received _____.
6. Last night I watched TV _____.

116.4 Read the situations and complete the sentences using *By the time* . . .

1. Lisa was invited to a party, but she got there much later than she intended.
By the time she got to the party, most of the other guests had left.
2. I was supposed to catch a train, but it took me longer than expected to get to the station.
_____, my train had already left.
3. I saw two men who looked as if they were trying to steal a car. I called the police, but it was some time before they arrived.
_____, the two men had disappeared.
4. A man escaped from prison last night. It was a long time before the guards discovered what had happened.
_____, the escaped prisoner was miles away.
5. I intended to go shopping after finishing my work. But I finished my work much later than expected.
_____, it was too late to go shopping.