

English After Dark

LUMARA ENGLISH · *English for the life you actually live.*

One mystery. One rainy night. One missing cat. And just enough English to figure out what happened — and how to talk about it. In this pack you'll read a complete original mystery story, learn three essential grammar structures, practise with real tasks, and walk away ready to tell your own stories in English. No textbook stiffness. No boring sentences. Just real, useful language wrapped in a story that actually goes somewhere.

Read

A full original mystery story with rich past-tense grammar in context

Learn

Past simple, past continuous, and *while/when* — clearly explained

Try

Six tasks, a speaking challenge, and a writing prompt — all scaffolded

The Light in Flat Seven

Before you read, picture this: it's 11 p.m. The power has just gone out. Your phone is at 4%. And then — a knock at the door. What would you do? In English, talking about moments like this requires two important tools: the **past simple** (for things that happened and finished) and the **past continuous** (for the background atmosphere — what was already happening when something interrupted it). By the end of this pack, you'll use both naturally.

Your 3 Goals for This Pack

1 Use past simple for completed events

I **heard** a knock. She **left** a note. He **opened** the door.

2 Use past continuous for background action

The candle **was flickering**. Someone **was walking** upstairs.

3 Connect events with **while** and **when**

While I was reading, I heard a whisper. I saw her **when** I turned on the light.

How to Use This Pack

Work through the cards in order. Read the story first — just enjoy it! Then go back to the **Learn It** card and look at the grammar inside the story. After that, try the tasks on your own before checking the answers at the end. The speaking and writing tasks on **Make It Yours** are for you to keep — there's no single correct answer, just your answer.

 **Spanish speakers:** In Spanish you have two past tenses — *pretérito indefinido* and *pretérito imperfecto*. English works similarly! Past simple ≈ *indefinido*. Past continuous ≈ *imperfecto*. This pack will make that click.

Read the Story

THE LIGHT IN FLAT SEVEN

The power cut happened at exactly half past ten. One moment I was reading my book, the candle on the table flickering in a draught from the window — the next, everything went dark. I sat very still and listened. The hallway outside my flat was silent.

Then someone knocked on my door.

I didn't answer immediately. I stood up slowly, my heart going a little faster than usual. Through the peephole I saw nothing — just darkness. When I finally opened the door, there was nobody there. But on the floor, lit by a thin strip of moonlight, lay a folded piece of paper. I picked it up. In small, careful handwriting, it said: **Your cat is with me. Flat 7. Don't worry.**

I had not noticed that Mochi was missing.

I grabbed my keys, my jacket, and the small battery lantern I kept on the shelf by the door. While I was climbing the stairs, I could hear footsteps somewhere above me — soft, unhurried. The lantern sent long shadows up the wall. I whispered Mochi's name once, quietly, as if the building itself might hear me.

Flat Seven was at the end of the corridor. The door was not locked. I pushed it open.

Inside, a woman was sitting on the floor with a blanket around her shoulders. Mochi — my small, grey, thoroughly ungrateful cat — was curled in her lap, purring. The woman looked up. She was perhaps sixty, with kind eyes and reading glasses pushed to the top of her head.

"He came through my window," she said. "I thought he looked cold."

The relief I felt in that moment was almost embarrassing. I laughed. She laughed. Mochi did not open his eyes.

I stayed for tea.

Grammar in the Dark: Past Simple & Past Continuous

Let's look at the two main grammar structures in the story. You'll find real examples pulled directly from *The Light in Flat Seven* — which makes them much easier to remember than invented sentences about "going to the supermarket."

1. Past Simple – Completed Events

Use the past simple for actions that **started and finished** in the past. They are done. There is a clear beginning and end. In a story, these are the plot events — the things that actually *happened*.

From the story:

The power cut **happened** at exactly half past ten.
I **picked** it up.
I **grabbed** my keys, my jacket, and the lantern.
She **looked** up.
I **laughed**. She **laughed**.

The pattern:

- ✓ Regular verbs: verb + **-ed** → *knock* → *knocked*, *look* → *looked*
- ✓ Irregular verbs: learn the form → *hear* → *heard*, *find* → *found*, *sit* → *sat*, *go* → *went*
- ✓ Negative: **didn't** + base form → *I didn't answer. She didn't move.*
- ✓ Question: **Did** + subject + base form → *Did you hear that?*

  **Spanish note:** *Past simple* ≈ *pretérito indefinido*. "Happened" = *ocurrió* / *pasó*. "I grabbed" = *agarré* / *tomé*. The structure works very similarly — one completed action, finished in the past.

2. Past Continuous – Background Action

Use the past continuous for an action that **was already in progress** when something else happened. It sets the scene — the mood, the atmosphere, the context. Think of it as the slow background music before something interrupts it.

Form: **was/were + verb-ing**

Background / scene-setting

One moment I **was reading** my book...
The candle **was flickering** in a draught...
While I **was climbing** the stairs, I could hear footsteps.

Interrupted by something

I **was reading** → then the power **went** out.
I **was climbing** → I **heard** footsteps above.
The continuous = the background.
The simple = the interruption.

Spanish note

Past continuous ≈ *pretérito imperfecto*.
"Was reading" = *estaba leyendo*.
"Was flickering" = *parpadeaba* / *estaba parpadeando*.

Key Vocabulary from the Story



flicker

To shine with a light that moves or trembles. "*The candle was flickering.*"
ES: *parpadear, titilar*



whisper

To speak very quietly. "*I whispered Mochi's name.*"
ES: *susurrar, decir en voz baja*



hallway

The passage or corridor inside a building. "*The hallway was silent.*"
ES: *pasillo, corredor*



footsteps

The sounds your feet make as you walk. "*I could hear footsteps above me.*"
ES: *pasos*

While & When – The Nuance That Changes Everything

Both **while** and **when** connect two past actions — but they behave differently. Getting this right takes your storytelling from "correct" to genuinely sophisticated. Let's look at exactly how they work, using the story and some new model dialogues.

WHILE – parallel or interrupted background

While introduces the action that was **already happening**. It almost always comes with the past continuous.

- **While I was climbing** the stairs, I **heard** footsteps. (*background → then interruption*)
- **While she was sitting** on the floor, Mochi **slept** in her lap. (*two parallel actions*)
- **While the power was out**, nobody **moved**. (*condition + action*)

ES: *mientras* — works very similarly in Spanish!

WHEN – a point in time

When can introduce the interrupting action (past simple) OR a moment in time. It often pairs with past simple on both sides.

- I was sitting quietly **when** someone **knocked**. (*interruption*)
- **When I opened** the door, nobody was there. (*sequence: first this, then that*)
- **When she looked up**, I felt immediate relief. (*one action follows another*)

ES: *cuando* — same idea, same position in the sentence.

Model Dialogue: The Next Morning

The narrator tells a friend what happened.

Friend: So what happened last night? You look terrible.

Narrator: Thanks. The power went out around half ten.

Friend: And?

Narrator: Well, I was sitting there in the dark when someone knocked on my door.

Friend: Who was it?

Narrator: Nobody! But there was a note on the floor. It said my cat was with someone in Flat Seven.

Friend: Your cat? I didn't know you had a cat.

Narrator: His name is Mochi. I didn't even notice he was gone.

While I was panicking about the dark, he just... walked upstairs through someone's open window.

Friend: That's ridiculous.

Narrator: When I found him, he was asleep on a stranger's lap. Purring.

Friend: Classic. And the neighbour?

Narrator: Really kind. We had tea. She showed me photos of every cat that has ever visited her flat. There are fourteen.

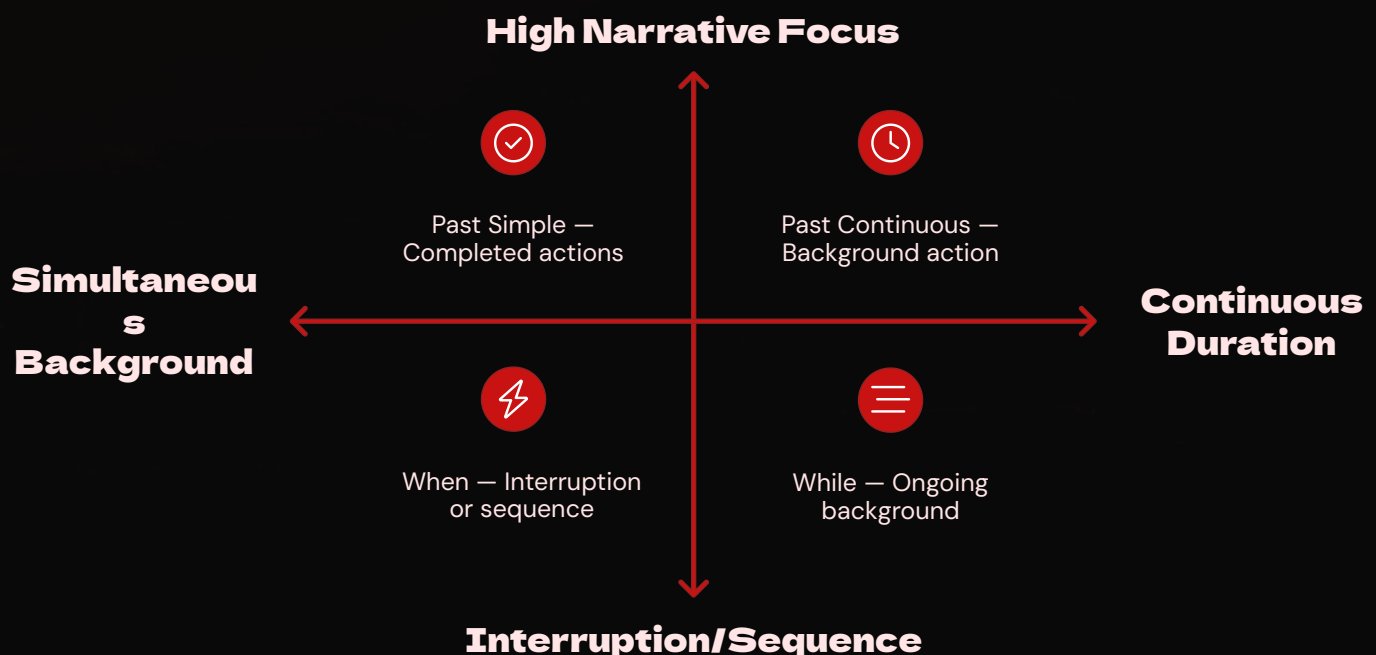
Friend: You're going to visit her again, aren't you.

Narrator: Obviously.

Notice how the dialogue naturally mixes past simple (*went, knocked, said, found*) and past continuous (*was sitting, was panicking*) with both *while* and *when*. This is real, natural storytelling in English.

📌 **Quick rule:** If you can say *mientras* → use **while + past continuous**. If you can say *cuando* with a specific moment → use **when + past simple**.

Grammar at a Glance



Six Tasks – Your Turn

Work through these tasks on your own. Write your answers below each question. There's space to think, cross things out, and try again — that's exactly how good language learning works. Don't check the answers until you've given each one a real try!

 **Remember:** For tasks 1 and 2, think about whether the action was *completed and finished* (past simple) or *already in progress as background* (past continuous) before you choose.

1

Choose the correct form

I _____ (walked / was walking) upstairs when I heard a noise.

Think: Was this the background action or the completed interruption?

Your answer: _____

2

Choose the correct form

She _____ (opened / was opening) the door and smiled.

Think: Are these two completed actions in sequence, or is one the background?

Your answer: _____

3

Find and correct the mistake

"I didn't heard it."

Think: What form does the main verb take after "didn't"?

Corrected sentence: _____

4

Give the past simple form

What is the past simple form of the verb **find**?

Think: Is this regular or irregular?

Your answer: _____

5

Reading comprehension

Why did the narrator go upstairs in the story?

Look back at the story if you need to. Use your own words.

Your answer: _____

6

Critical thinking

Was the ending of the story threatening or reassuring? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Use a phrase like: "The ending was _____ because in the story it says '...'"

Your answer: _____

Your Turn to Tell the Story

Grammar only sticks when it becomes *yours*. These two tasks ask you to use what you've learned in your own words, about your own ideas. There's no perfectly correct answer here — only your answer, built with the tools you now have.

🗣️ Speaking Task: Tell the Story Back

Imagine you are the narrator. Tell a friend (real or imaginary!) what happened on the night of the power cut. Speak for **60–90 seconds**. You can use the notes below to plan first.

Useful phrases:

- It all started when...
- At first, I was [verb-ing]... and then suddenly...
- While I was [verb-ing], I [verb — past simple]...
- When I opened the door, I found...
- The strange part was that...
- In the end, it turned out that...

Planning space — jot key words here:

Setting:

First event:

The note said:

What I did next:

What I found:

How I felt:

✅ Speaking success checklist:

- ☐ I used at least two past simple verbs
- ☐ I used at least one past continuous verb
- ☐ I used *while* or *when* at least once
- ☐ My story had a beginning, middle, and end
- ☐ I kept going even when I wasn't sure of a word

✍️ Writing Task: Your Mystery Note

Write a short paragraph (80–100 words) describing a mysterious or surprising moment you experienced — or one you invent! It could be a strange sound at night, an unexpected visitor, or something you found that didn't make sense at first. Use the past simple, past continuous, and at least one *while* or *when*.

Planning space:

Where were you?

What were you doing (past continuous)?

What happened (past simple)?

How did it feel?

How did it resolve?

Write your paragraph here:

✅ Writing success checklist:

- ☐ 80–100 words (approximately)
- ☐ Past simple used for completed events
- ☐ Past continuous used for background
- ☐ *While* or *when* connects two actions
- ☐ Story has a clear ending

💖 Meme of the Pack



Caption: "I was texting for help when the power went out."
— Every narrator, ever.

🧠 Language note on this caption:

Look at the structure: "I **was** texting [past continuous] when the power went out [past simple]."

This is a perfect real-life example of our grammar! The continuous action (texting) was interrupted by the sudden completed event (power cut). You can use this exact structure to describe any interrupted action:

- I was cooking dinner when I heard a noise.
- She was reading when the message arrived.
- We were laughing when the door opened.

Make your own version: I **was** _____ when _____.

Your sentence:

Answer Key & Model Responses

Check your work here — but only after you've tried! Remember: for the speaking and writing tasks, the model responses below are *one good example*, not the only correct version. Your version can be completely different and just as good.

Closed Task Answers

Task 1 ✓

was walking

"I was walking upstairs when I heard a noise."

The walking was the **background action already in progress** (past continuous). Hearing the noise was the sudden **interruption** (past simple).

Task 2 ✓

opened

"She opened the door and smiled."

Two **completed actions in sequence** — first she opened it, then she smiled. Both are past simple. No background action here.

Task 3 ✓

I didn't hear it.

After *didn't*, always use the **base form** of the verb (no -ed, no past form). *Didn't* already carries the past tense — the main verb stays in its simplest form.

ES: *No lo escuché.*

Task 4 ✓

found

Find → *found*. This is an **irregular verb** — it doesn't follow the -ed rule. Other useful irregular pairs: *hear* → *heard*, *go* → *went*, *sit* → *sat*, *leave* → *left*.

Task 5 ✓

To find the cat / to follow the note and the battery light to Flat Seven.

From the story: the narrator found the note saying *"Your cat is with me. Flat 7."* and followed the light upstairs. Any answer mentioning the cat, the note, or Flat Seven is correct.

Task 6 ✓

Reassuring.

The neighbour was **caring for** the missing cat. The story ends with tea and laughter — not danger. Evidence from the text: *"He came through my window. I thought he looked cold."* and *"The relief I felt was almost embarrassing."*

Model Responses: Speaking & Writing

🗣️ Model Speaking Response

"OK so — it all started when the power went out. I was just sitting in my flat reading, and suddenly — dark. Complete silence. And then someone knocked on my door. When I opened it, there was nobody there — but there was a note on the floor. It said 'Your cat is with me.' Which — I didn't even know my cat was gone! While I was walking upstairs with a little lantern, I could hear footsteps somewhere above me. It was honestly a bit frightening. But when I opened the door to Flat Seven, I found my cat asleep on my neighbour's lap. She'd made tea. In the end it was actually a really lovely evening."

Grammar used: went out, knocked, opened, found (past simple) · was sitting, was walking (past continuous) · while I was walking · when I opened

✍️ Model Writing Response

Last winter I was walking home from work when I noticed a small cardboard box on my doorstep. I wasn't expecting any deliveries. While I was looking at the box, my neighbour came outside and told me she found it that morning. I opened it carefully. Inside, there was a single red scarf — no note, no name. I still don't know who left it there. But it was exactly the right size, and exactly my favourite colour. Sometimes the mystery is the whole point.

Grammar used: noticed, came, told, found, opened (past simple) · was walking, was looking (past continuous) · while I was looking · when I noticed

Key Learning Points – Quick Recap

Past Simple

Completed events. The plot. What happened. Regular (-ed) and irregular forms. Negative: **didn't + base verb**.

Past Continuous

Background in progress. Scene-setting. **was/were + verb-ing**. Often interrupted by a past simple event.

While & When

While = background/parallel (+ continuous). **When** = moment/sequence (+ simple). Both connect two past actions.

📌 **★ You did it!** You read a full mystery story in English, identified grammar in context, completed six tasks, and created your own story. That's real English learning — and it's exactly what this pack is for.