GrammarError.com

Narrative Tenses in Context

Hard | C1 | Advanced | Past tense | Verb | Verb tense | Perfect tense | Progressive tense | Simple tense

1. Help Detective Miller complete his official, albeit slightly dramatic, incident report by choosing the correct verb form.

By the time I finally breached the suspect's apartment, the heavy-duty paper shredder was dangerously overheated and smoking. It was overwhelmingly obvious that he _____ documents for hours before my arrival.

Select one.

A) had been shredding
B) was shredding
C) has been shredding
D) had shredded

2. Complete the embarrassed actor's apology note to the director by choosing the correct verb for each blank.

I completely ruined the finale! Before my grand entrance, I _____ a rather messy taco in the dressing room for a solid twenty minutes. When I finally _____ the stage manager shouting my name, I realized with horror that the villain _____ the final monologue without me.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) had been enjoying
B) was enjoying
C) have been enjoying

Blank 2

A) noticed
B) had noticed
C) was noticing

Blank 3

A) had already delivered
B) has already delivered
C) was already delivering

3. Complete the time traveler's mission log. Select ALL the options that grammatically and logically fit into the blank to describe the scene he found upon returning.

When Professor Higgins finally returned to the year 2024, his laboratory was a complete disaster. It was obvious that his robotic assistant _____

Select all that apply.

A) had been trying to bake a cake, as flour covered every surface.
B) had tried to bake a cake and completely destroyed the temporal oven.
C) was trying to bake a cake, as flour covers every surface.
D) has been trying to bake a cake, as flour covered every surface.
E) had dismantled the main console while he was away.

4. Help the eccentric detective finish her dramatic case report by selecting the correct narrative tenses for each blank.

When I finally burst into the dimly lit parlor, the suspect _____ back and forth for nearly an hour. The poor man _____ four cups of black coffee and _____ like a leaf in a hurricane.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) had been pacing
B) was pacing
C) paced

Blank 2

- **A)** had already consumed
- **B)** was already consuming
- **C)** has already consumed

Blank 3

- **A)** was violently trembling
- **B)** had violently trembled
- **C)** violently trembled

5. Read the beginning of this mystery novel and select ALL the grammatically correct options that could logically complete the sentence.

By the time Detective Harper finally burst through the dining room doors, _____

Select all that apply.

- **A)** the guests had already finished the dessert, and the host was staring at the empty bowls.
- **B)** the guests were still eating the dessert, blissfully unaware of the impending danger.
- **C)** the guests have already finished the dessert, and the host is staring at the empty bowls.
- **D)** the guests had been eating the dessert for at least ten minutes.
- **E)** the guests were eating the dessert, and the host has stared at the empty bowls.

6. Complete the camper's tragic (but hilarious) diary entry by choosing the most accurate narrative tenses.

I _____ blissfully in my tent when a suspiciously loud crunch snapped me awake. I instantly realized that I _____ to secure the food cooler. By the time I finally located my flashlight in the dark, a massive raccoon _____ my entire stash of marshmallows and was happily licking its sticky paws!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was sleeping
- **B)** have been sleeping
- **C)** had slept

Blank 2

- **A)** had forgotten
- **B)** was forgetting
- **C)** have forgotten

Blank 3

- **A)** had already devoured
- **B)** was already devouring
- **C)** already devoured

7. Help the embarrassed actor write his apology letter to the director. Select ALL the sentences that correctly use narrative tenses to explain the disaster.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** I forgot my lines because I had been panicking about my costume all morning.
- **B)** When I walked onto the stage, I realized I had left my prop in the dressing room.
- **C)** I was forgetting my lines because I was panicking about my costume all morning.
- **D)** When I had walked onto the stage, I realized I left my prop in the dressing room.
- **E)** I tripped over the sound cable while I was making my dramatic entrance.

8. Complete the restaurant manager's tragic recounting of a disastrous dinner service.

By the time the notoriously harsh food critic arrived at our humble diner, Chef Marcel _____ three dozen eggs onto the kitchen floor and was on the verge of a complete nervous breakdown.

Select one.

- **A)** had been dropping
- **B)** dropped
- **C)** was dropping
- **D)** had dropped

9. Help the detective finish his official report by choosing the correct narrative tense for each gap in the timeline of events.

When I finally breached the study, it was obvious that Lord Reginald _____ documents for at least an hour. However, by the time I crossed the room, he _____ tea calmly in his armchair, insisting to my officers that he _____ up from a nap.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** had been shredding
- **B)** was shredding
- **C)** shredded

Blank 2

- **A)** was sipping
- **B)** had sipped
- **C)** sipped

Blank 3

- **A)** had just woken
- **B)** has just woken
- **C)** was just waking

10. Choose the correct phrase to complete the traveler's miserable (but funny) diary entry about a camping trip gone wrong.

When we finally managed to pitch the tent at midnight, we were completely exhausted and covered in thick mud. It _____ heavily since we had left the highway five hours earlier, turning the trail into a swamp.

Select one.

- **A)** rained
- **B)** was raining
- **C)** had been raining
- **D)** has been raining