

Business English tense review- Upper Intermediate/ Advanced

A: Time Clauses

1. Match at least one of these time clauses with each of the sentences below.

when I joined this company

in the 1990s

the other day

during a meeting

recently

since January

hardly ever

by Tuesday

never

for a year

in a fortnight's time

this week

- a) I didn't have a lot of experience
- b) My boss uses a laptop
- c) I was looking for a different job
- d) I worked for my present company's major competitor
- e) I have been working on this project
- f) I last made a conference call in English
- g) I'm flying to Munich
- h) I'll finish this report
- i) I was caught making personal phonecalls
- j) I've had a lot in my in-tray

2. Make true sentences about yourself using each of the time clauses.

3. Read out one of your sentences without the time clause and see if the other students can guess which time clause is true for you.

Discussing Grammar

B: Grammatical similarities: Aspect and voice

What are the similarities between these different forms?

- 1a) I can't talk. I'm meeting a client.
- 1b) I was just closing the deal when my direct boss walked in and ruined everything.
- 1c) My plane will be landing just as yours is taking off.

- 2a) I've been in exactly this situation many times.
- 2b) They had already accepted a rival bid by the time we had ours ready.
- 2c) They will have increased sales by 50% well before the projected time.

- 3a) A good team is made from good individuals
- 3b) The computer, like so many other inventions, was invented to help us wage war
- 3c) Wine has been produced here since the year dot.

C: Grammatical differences

Why are different tenses used in the contrasting sentences?

- 1a) I work for a well-known multinational
- 1b) I'm working on restructuring the company

- 2a) What were you doing when the headhunter called?
- 2b) What did you do when the headhunter called?

- 3a) When we arrived, they introduced the main conference speakers
- 3b) When we arrived, they were introducing the main conference speakers
- 3c) When we arrived, they had introduced the main conference speakers

- 4a) I've worked with several very prestigious clients
- 4b) I worked with several very prestigious clients

- 5a) I've been replying to customer enquiries all day
- 5b) I've nearly cleared the backlog of enquiries from the Xmas break

D: Short forms pronunciation

1. Listen and complete the gaps

In this country, _____ better start looking at the job ads if you want to climb the corporate ladder.

There _____ many shopping days left till Xmas.

_____ sign on for another 5 years if you just increase the bonus a little.

_____ rather have no deal at all than lose face.

_____ probably the place with the best balance between work and play in Europe.

Our competitors _____ given bribes to get that last deal, they have such a bad reputation.

Business conditions _____ improve much in the next financial year.

_____ only work if we change the whole corporate culture of the company.

If you improve your time management, _____ only find more work for you to do.

We _____ taken more holidays last year, as it would actually have improved our productivity.

If we just ignore it, _____ go away.

I don't know _____ replacing my boss, but I don't envy him.

I'm always late, _____?

Proper grammar's really important in Business English, but I _____ got none.

2. Which of the sentences above are standard spoken English? Repeat those sentences, paying attention to the pronunciation of the short forms.

3. What are the long forms of each example?

4. Which of the sentences above are true for you? Change the ones that are not. Read out the true sentences and discuss them with your partner.