

Tales from the Waiting Room

A. Read the first part of the story.

Last Saturday night, I arrived home feeling exhausted. I had been working for twelve hours straight and I had missed lunch, so I was absolutely starving. As I was too tired to cook, I decided to heat up a frozen pizza in the microwave. A couple of minutes later it was ready, and I started putting it on my plate. As I was doing this, I suddenly realised that it needed olives, so I took a jar out of the fridge and unscrewed the lid. Unfortunately, when I put my hand inside to grab some olives...

B. Now, match four sentence parts from the story to the correct narrative tense. Then, complete the definitions of the four tenses.

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| 1. I had been working | a. the past simple |
| 2. I had missed lunch | b. the past continuous |
| 3. I was too tired to cook | c. the past perfect |
| 4. As I was doing this | d. the past perfect continuous |
5. We use to describe actions in progress at a particular time in the past.
6. We use to describe completed actions or events in the past.
7. We use to describe events which happened before a past event.
8. We use to describe actions which were in progress before another past event.

C. Read the next part of the story and underline the correct forms of the verbs.

...my hand (1) *got / was getting* stuck in the jar and I couldn't get it out. After an hour of unsuccessful attempts to remove it, I finally (2) *gave / was giving* up and (3) *decided / had decided* to catch a taxi to the hospital.

As I (4) *had been walking / was walking* from the reception desk to the waiting area, I realized that the receptionists (5) *laughed / were laughing* at me.

Fortunately, there were only a few other people waiting, and I (6) *sat / was sitting* down next to a man who (7) *had / was having* a cushion on his lap. He (8) *asked / had asked* me why I (9) *had / was having* a jar on my hand and I told him what (10) *was happening / had happened*. I then asked him why he had a cushion on his lap and this is what he told me...



D. Why do you think the man had a cushion on his lap? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

E. Read the next part of the story and fill in the gaps with the verbs in brackets in their correct form.

He said that recently he (1) (take up) sewing and he (2) (make) a cushion for his wife's birthday when he accidentally (3) (sew) the cushion to his left hand and that he was now unable to get it off. He then proceeded to lift up his left hand, and I (4) (see) that the cushion was attached to it. It looked painful. Suddenly, I didn't feel so ridiculous anymore.

It was then that I (5) (notice) the poor man sitting opposite us. He looked rather uncomfortable, and he (6) (wear) a winter scarf around his neck, even though it was the middle of summer. I asked him why he (7) (wear) a scarf on such a hot day and this is what he told me.

He said he (8) (play) tennis with his wife and (9) (yawn) unexpectedly, at precisely which time his wife hit the ball right into his mouth. She (10) (hit) it so hard that it had gone down to his throat and got stuck there. He then (11) (unwind) his scarf, and I (12) (gasp) as I saw a huge ball-shaped lump in his throat.

In the corner of the waiting room, I suddenly noticed an elderly man in a grey suit. He had, what looked like a handkerchief in his mouth, and was shaking uncontrollably.

F. Why do you think the elderly man had a handkerchief in his mouth?

G. Complete the last part of the story with the verbs from the box in their correct form.

still / shake pull	tell say	break walk	stand up decide	put laugh
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He then (1) the handkerchief out of his mouth and I was shocked to see that he (2) uncontrollably, and obviously (3) it there to suppress his laughter. Still laughing, he (4) us that his television (5) the day before, and that without a television to watch, he'd had to find some other form of entertainment, which is why he (6) to visit the hospital waiting room. "Thank you," he (7), still shaking with laughter. "Your ridiculous stories have provided me with more amusement than any television program I've ever seen."

He then (8), put his handkerchief in his pocket, and (9) out of the waiting room. As he walked into the distance, it was obvious that he (10) with laughter.

