

Past Simple Exercises

Exercise One: When was the last time...?

This is best done as a conversation exercise with a partner but you could do it alone and simply talk to yourself - if the latter, talk out loud, not in your head because you need to practise speaking not just thinking!

When was the last time you went on holiday?

The last time I went on holiday was last summer.

Where did you go?

I went to London.

Oh, great. Where did you stay?

We stayed in a hotel in the West End.

etc

There are many more typical questions you can ask such as:

How long did you stay? Who did you go with? How did you get there? How was the weather? How was the food? How was the hotel? Why did you choose London? What did you do? Did you like it?

If you're working with a partner, remember to have your partner ask you about your last holiday as well!

You can ask the 'when was the last time' questions about a thousand and one things. Here are some ideas.

- went dancing
- bought someone a present
- went out for a dinner
- went out on a date (this means 'romantic')
- played a musical instrument
- played with a child
- sang a song
- acted in a play
- did some sport
- got lost
- had to go to hospital (as a patient or to visit someone)
- went to a concert
- went to the cinema
- learnt something new

Remember to ask lots of follow up questions as well, like you did with the holiday topic.

Now think of some of your own ideas.

Exercise Two: What happened in...?

This is best done as a conversation exercise with a partner but you could do it alone and simply talk to yourself - if the latter, talk out loud, not in your head because you need to practise speaking not just thinking!

You and your partner have to write down three years when something important happened in your lives (or when you did something important). Here are the three years that I use:

1999

2003

2010

Now ask your partner one of the following questions:

What happened in _____?

What did you do in _____?

What happened _____ years ago?

What did you do _____ years ago?

My answers are:

In 1999 my mother died, I graduated from university and I moved from the UK to Spain.

In 2003 I founded my own company - a record label and concert promoter. We released CDs and organised and promoted concerts in Spain.

In 2010 I left Spain and moved to Vienna, Austria. I started working as an English trainer again and I started learning German.

You could expand the exercise by asking about more years and/or by asking for more information, e.g.

1999: What did you study at university? Did you like it? Was the course good? Why did you move to Spain? Where did you live? Did you learn Spanish? etc

Exercise Three: Describe a journey

This is best done as a conversation exercise with a partner but you could do it alone and simply talk to yourself - if the latter, talk out loud, not in your head because you need to practise speaking not just thinking!

Ask your partner to describe a journey. This could be how they got from Vienna to London when they last went on holiday or it could be how they got to the place where you are studying together earlier on. Or how they got to work yesterday.

(**NOTE** we use the pronoun 'they' when the third person singular noun such as 'your partner' is not gender specific. Here it does not indicate plural, it indicates **third person singular gender unknown**).