

I caught a falling baby: Worksheet

Grammar Focus

Exercise 1

Present tenses



“I’ve always known that I’m very quick with my hands. If someone throws something, I catch it almost before I’m aware it has been thrown.”

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1. What tenses are used in the 1st sentence?
2. Why are the two different tenses used?
3. What type of grammar is the second sentence.
4. Why is it used?

Exercise 2 – Past tenses

“I was going to visit a friend with her newborn and was on my way to a toy store to buy a gift. I’d once lived in the neighbourhood and on a whim I decided to head back to my old haunt, a cupcake shop, for a coffee.”

Vocabulary

- What is the meaning of *on a whim* in this sentence?
 - a) spontaneously
 - b) deliberately
 - c) immediately
- Does *on a whim* normally get used when telling positive or negative parts of a story?
- The writer says “I decided to head back to my old haunt” – What was their old haunt? And what do you think an old haunt could be?

Grammar

1. What is the first tense used in this extract and why is it used?
2. What is the reason the speaker used past simple in the first sentence?
3. In the second sentence the writer uses past perfect? Why is this a good choice for this sentence?

Exercise 3 - Relative clause

"I just wanted the child, who I later found out was called Dillon, to feel safe"

1. What does the relative clause here do?
 - a) Explain who the child is
 - b) add extra information
2. Could the sentence work without the relative clause?

Exercise 4 – linking words

"We didn't practise together, but I guess my reflexes must have naturally developed."

1. 'but' is used to introduce contrasting information or ideas, how could the sentence be rewritten with 'though'? Where in the sentence could it fit?
2. Is there any difference to the meaning when it is moved?

"I was approached by a typical Brooklyn older man, who in a calm and very matter-of-fact way told me to call 911, because there was a baby on a fire escape."

1. Which words could replace 'because' with the same meaning?
2. Would they change the style?

Exercise 5 – conditionals

A "what would have happened if I hadn't caught him."

B "if we let intuition lead us, we can deal with anything."

Look at the two conditionals above:

1. Which one talks about the past?
2. Did the past happen or is it imaginary? What do we use this type of conditional for normally?
3. What time does the other conditional talk about?
4. Where is conditional B in the text? Why do you think they used it there?

Exercise 6 – Vocabulary

Find the following chunks in the text and try to work out what the underlined words mean in the context.

- looking around nonchalantly
- baby boy became my only priority.
- Apparently, he had slipped through pieces of cardboard
- Instinctively, he grabbed on as he fell,
- my attention was purely focused on my intention to catch the baby
- As he tumbled, he hit a protruding plastic sign
- it turned out it was only his lip that had been cut
- Dillon's parents had been woken by the commotion

Exercise 7 – Putting it all together

1. Examine the last paragraph, what different tenses are being used and why? Discuss them in a small group.
2. What do you think mindfulness is?

Pronunciation

'The reality of saving someone's life is intense. I play it over in my head so many times'

The Schwa - /ə/ - it is the most common sound in English and it lets us speak with intonation.

1. Look at the two sentences above, which words contain a schwa?
2. Which words would be connected?