

57 I can describe the past, present, and future

A Thinking about time

- **Time flies** when you get older.
- I get depressed **from time to time**.
- I will go to university **in due course**.
- **It's about time** I started a pension.
- **At one time** I wanted to be a journalist.
- I do everything **at the last minute**.
- **In retrospect**, I wish I'd gone to university.
- **For the time being** I'm happy where I am.
- My parents are a bit **behind the times**.
- I've become more tolerant **over time**.
- Elvis Presley was a bit **before my time**.
- **With hindsight** I should've worked harder.

Glossary

time flies	time seems to pass very quickly.	in retrospect	thinking now about the past, often with a different view from the one you had then. SYN looking back .
from time to time	sometimes but not regularly. SYN now and again .	for the time being	for a short period of time but not permanently.
in due course	at the right time and not before.	behind the times	old-fashioned in ideas, ways, etc.
it's about time	used to say that sth should happen soon or should have happened already (notice the past tense). SYN it's high time .	over time	gradually.
at one time	in the past but not now.	before your time	before you were born or before you can remember.
do sth at the last minute	do sth at the latest possible time before sth else happens. SYN leave sth to/till the last minute .	with hindsight	with the ability to understand a situation only after it has happened (with the benefit of hindsight).

1 Find nine time phrases in the box.

at the last over in with behind at retrospect from time for the time
in due the times minute one time course hindsight time being to time

2 Complete the sentences.

- 1 In _____, I don't think I made the most of my time at university.
- 2 With the benefit of _____ it was probably a mistake for me to leave my last job.
- 3 The trouble with Angel is that he _____ everything to the last _____.
- 4 Listen, it's _____ time you started taking these exams seriously.
- 5 My mum used to love punk music, but it's a bit _____ my _____.
- 6 The time has _____ since I've been in Greece. I've loved every minute of it.
- 7 The university says they'll give us the date of the exams in due _____.
- 8 _____ one time I wanted to be a professional footballer. I think I'm a bit old for that now.
- 9 Your English won't improve immediately; it happens _____ time.
- 10 This dictionary will be fine _____ the time _____.

3 **ABOUT YOU** Read the statements at the top again. Are they true for you? If not, write answers that are true for you using the phrases in bold, or talk to another student.

B Time words which are similar in meaning

Word	Example	Meaning
during throughout	<i>It rained during the day.</i> <i>It rained throughout the day.</i>	at a point within a period of time. continuously within a period of time.
age era	<i>We're living in the nuclear age.</i> <i>When Mandela was released, it was the beginning of a new era.</i>	a particular period of history. a period of time with a particular quality or character.
extend sth prolong sth	<i>They're going to extend my visa.</i> <i>The drugs will prolong her life.</i>	increase the length of time of sth. make sth last longer. <small>OPP curtail FML.</small>
interval gap break	<i>Buses run at regular intervals.</i> <i>There's a fifteen-minute interval.</i> <i>We met again after a ten-year gap.</i> <i>I get a coffee break and lunch break at work.</i>	a period of time between two events or two parts of sth, e.g. a play. a period of time when sth stops. a short period of time when you stop what you are doing and rest.
spell stage phase	<i>I did a spell of work there.</i> <i>I stopped for water at one stage.</i> <i>It's just a phase that most teenagers go through.</i> <i>It's an early stage/phase of the project.</i>	a short period of time or of a particular activity. a period that forms part of an activity. a difficult period of time that sb/sth passes through (stage is also possible). a period of time that forms part of a process or the development of sth.
pass elapse go by	<i>Two years passed / elapsed / went by before I saw her again.</i> <i>Time passed / went by slowly.</i>	all the verbs describe the process of time; elapse is FML; pass and go by are often used with an adverb to describe how time happens.
soon or shortly	<i>He soon realized it was a mistake.</i> <i>I'll be with you soon/shortly.</i> <i>I left soon/shortly after Dina.</i> <i>He left shortly before midnight.</i>	quickly (after sth happens). in a short period of time from now. a short period after sb/sth. a short period before sb/sth.

4 Circle the correct word(s). Both words may be correct.

- There's bound to be a **gap** / **an interval** during the concert.
- We're off **soon** / **shortly** but I'll give you a ring tomorrow.
- Several days **went by** / **elapsed** before the solicitor rang me again.
- She had a short **spell** / **stage** working for an oil company.
- I woke up twice **during** / **throughout** the night.
- She's reached a critical **stage** / **phase** in her career.
- The late 70s was the height of the 'punk music' **age** / **era**.
- I'm afraid we will have to **curtail** / **prolong** the meeting until 9.00.

5 Complete the text with suitable time words.

I went to university in 1995, and I worked incredibly hard (1)..... the time I was there. I decided I needed a (2)..... after that, so I travelled round Europe, spending nine months in France. (3)..... the time I was there, I had a short (4)..... of work teaching English. It was the most interesting (5)..... of my life. When I came back, I decided that as we were living in the computer (6)....., I'd get a job in IT. It was a terrible mistake. I (7)..... realized I didn't want to sit at a computer all day, and although the company offered to (8)..... my contract, I decided to quit. So, after a three-year (9)....., I retrained as a teacher, and came to work in Finland. Almost five years have (10)..... since I made that decision.