



Hello. I'm Margot Politis. Welcome to Study English, IELTS preparation.

Today we're going to look at ways to talk about something that's happened in the past, and we'll also have a look at ways to form compound and complex sentences.

First, we're going to listen to a woman talk about a dramatic event in her past. Four years ago, she had a stroke – a blood vessel burst in her brain.

Here's what happened to her.

A stroke is whereby the blood supply to the brain is cut off. The major signs of having had a stroke that most people would equate with is weakness, so paralysis of an arm, leg or face. In others it can be a loss of speech or inability to communicate. Others may have loss of vision or a combination of all those things.

I was just so physically fit and also emotionally I was on top of the world. I had a really good job at that time, and I was getting married.

I just felt terribly nauseous and I woke up with pins and needles down one side of my leg, and then it worked its way up towards my arm and across.

I was just immobile. I couldn't move. I couldn't walk. I was paralysed on this side of my body.

Simone is telling her story. She is giving a recount of what happened to her and how she was affected.

A recount is a story about past events, usually in the order in which they occur.

Let's take another look at a clip from today's episode. Listen for the past tense verbs in Simone's story.

I was just so physically fit and also emotionally I was on top of the world. I had a really good job at this time, and I was getting married.

She says 'I was so physically fit, I was on top of the world. I had a really good job'

Here, 'was' and 'had' are past tense verbs.

They're irregular verbs.

Let's compare the three forms of these irregular verbs.





From the infinitive form of the verb 'to be', we can form the simple present forms: 'am', 'is' and 'are'; and we can also make the simple past forms – 'was or were'.

Notice that the verb to be is the only verb in English that has two past tense forms. All others just have one.

Let's do the same for the verb 'to have'.

What is the simple present for of the verb 'to have'?

'Has', or 'have'.

And the simple past form?

'Had'.

When you learn new verbs, it's important to learn them with all their different forms, so make sure you write verbs down in a notebook, and work out all their different tenses as well.

When you are recounting a story that happened in the past, you'll need to use all these simple past tense forms of verbs.

You'll also need to use a variety of 'transition signals' - words that help to order the events.

Using transition signals will help the reader or listener follow the order of events in the story.

Listen for the transition signal in this clip.

I just felt terribly nauseous and I woke up with pins and needles down one side of my leg, and then it worked its way up towards my arm and across.

She uses the word 'then'. 'Then' is very common in informal spoken language, so are other more informal transition signals like 'next' or 'after that'.

Simone said she had a feeling of pins and needles in her leg. 'Then' it worked its way to her arm.

In more formal language, you might find transition signals like 'at first' or 'subsequently, or 'after a while'.

to be	
simple present	simple past
am	was
is	were
are	

to have	
simple present	simple past
has	had
have	



If we wanted to make Simone's story clearer, we could add some transition signals to her story.

If we were writing her story, we might use more formal transition signals.

Simone had a feeling of pins and needles in her leg. 'Then' it worked its way to her arm.

We might say:

'At first,' Simone had a feeling of pins and needles in her leg. 'After a while,' it worked its way to her arm.

Notice that transition signals like this are often followed by commas.

Adding transition signals has made Simone's story clearer. You can more easily see the order of events. This is very important in more formal language.

Try to make sure you learn and use a number of different transition signals.

Now let's have another listen to a clip of Simone talking about her illness.

Pay attention to the type of sentences that Simone uses. Are the sentences simple, compound or complex?

It worked its way up towards my arm and across. I was just immobile. I couldn't move. I couldn't walk. I was paralysed on this side of my body.

Most of the sentences that Simone uses are 'simple' sentences.

If we wanted to write an account of Simone's illness, we could join up some of these sentences to make 'compound' and 'complex' sentences.

We form 'compound' and 'complex' sentences by joining simple sentences and phrases together.

Simone says:

'I was just immobile. I couldn't move. I couldn't walk.'

But we could edit this to say:

'I was just immobile. I couldn't move or walk.'

Or :

'I was just immobile. I could neither move nor walk.'

OK, now let's finish with a quick look at the words used in the clip. Listen to the clip one more time, and then we'll talk about a quick way to build your vocabulary.



Listen again...

I was just immobile. I couldn't move. I couldn't walk. I was paralysed on this side of my body.

Simone says she was 'immobile'.

The prefix 'im-' is used to make the opposites of words beginning with 'm' or 'p'.

'Im-' means not, so 'immobile' is the opposite of 'mobile' – it means not mobile.

So we can have 'mobile' and 'immobile',

'mature', and 'immature',

'polite' and 'impolite',

'patient' and 'impatient'.

Knowing the opposites of words is very important.

Many words just have a different word that means the opposite, like:

'hot, cold', 'happy, sad', 'in, out' 'up, down';

but other words take prefixes that mean not – like 'un-', 'de-', 'dis', 'in-'.

Listen to some of the clip again. Then we'll look at a how a few more opposites are formed.

The major signs of having had a stroke that most people would equate with is weakness, so paralysis of an arm, leg or face. In others it can be a loss of speech or inability to communicate.

I was just so physically fit and also emotionally I was on top of the world.

He says a sign of a stroke can be an 'inability' to communicate.

He uses the 'in-' prefix meaning 'not'.

'Inability' means not having the ability, and here's a few more opposites.

She says she was physically fit, emotionally on top of the world.

The opposite of 'fit' is 'unfit'.

The opposite of 'emotionally' is 'unemotionally'.



A great tip is to try to find words with opposite meanings. Some words have several meanings, so they have several opposites as well. A good thesaurus will really help you with this.

And that's all from me today. Don't forget to practice forming compound and complex sentences. And remember to practice reading and writing in English every day. I'll see you next time on Study English. Bye.

