A brief history of the English Language.

EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Revise and practice the past tenses. Learn about the history of our language. Learn some idiomatic expressions. Dialogues and role plays. Comprehension activities.

Activity One: Ask and answer with your teacher or partner:



1. Are you interested in history in general?
2. Have you ever studied or read about the history of the English language?
3. Have you studied the history of the French language?

Activity Two: Review the past tenses in English: Let's start with some general advice:

When we talk about past events in English we usually use the past simple, it's the most commonly used past tense. This is why you really need to learn the irregular past participles off by heart.

When you are unsure of which past tense to use, if you choose the simple past then at least you can be sure that people will understand that you are talking about the past and more often than not it is the right choice. So, don't worry and hesitate, just use the simple past when you are not sure. "

Don't be tempted to use the Present perfect systematically because it sounds like the French passé simple. (**I read** a book about history - no auxiliary verb J'ai lu un livre - uses the auxiliary 'avoir').

We only use the present perfect (have done) when there is some connection or link to what you are talking about in the present or to your present situation. Remember also that when you are talking about something that started in the past and continues today you need to use the present perfect continuous - for an action in the past which is still happening today. (I **have been studying** linguistics for a month now).

Let's **review** the different past tenses and their uses so that you can feel more confident.

Simple Past - [verb+ed] or irregular verbs

Use 1 : Completed Action in the Past

I went to my English lesson yesterday.

Use 2 : A Series of Completed Actions

I went to my English lesson, then I went to work, then I went home.

Use 3 : Habits in the Past or duration in the past

I learned English for two years.
I used to go swimming every day when I was a child.

Past Continuous - [was/were + present participle]

Use 1 : Interrupted Action in the Past

I was doing my English homework when you called.

Use 2 : Action continuing at a Specific Time (était en train de)

Last night at six o' clock I was doing my English homework.

Use 3 : Parallel Actions

I was was making dinner while he was doing his homework.

Present Perfect - [has/have + past participle]

Use : Unspecified Time Before Now

Have you met my English teacher before?

We use the **Present Perfect** to say that an action happened at an unspecified time before now. The exact time is not important. You **CANNOT** use the Present Perfect with specific time expressions such as: yesterday, one year ago, last week, when I was a child, when I lived in Montpellier, at that moment, that day, one day, etc. We **CAN** use the Present Perfect with unspecific expressions such as: ever, never, once, many times, several times, before, so far, already, yet, etc.

Past Perfect - [had + past participle]

You had studied English before you moved to New-York.



So MOST OF THE TIME IN ENGLISH WE USE THE SIMPLE PAST.

You need to know the **IRREGULAR PAST PARTICIPLES** in order to use the SIMPLE PAST.

Activity Three: Comprehension activity. Watch the first part of the video and answer the questions. Then read the expressions from the video and try to use some of them in sentences you make up with your partner. Which are your favorite expressions? Which did you know already? Did you know about their origin before today?

The History of English in 10 Minutes - Sub ENG
Let's watch the first four chapters (until 4:22 mins)
Please watch the rest at home because it's really funny and interesting too!

Questions:

1. Where do we get the names for four of the days of the week? (Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri)
2. What was the main purpose of the French language in Britain?
3. How did Shakespeare change the English language?
4. What was created in 1611 that introduced new phrases and expressions to the language?

Chapter one: Expressions



to flood in: when a large quantity of people enter a space quickly
in honor of: as an expression of respect for someone or something
to bother with: to make an effort or trouble to do something
to steal in: to enter without being noticed
long weekend: (noun) a weekend extended by one or more days
to be a hit: to be very popular
funky: (adjective) a bit, odd or different
to be into: to be interested in something
to watch out for: to be cautious of someone or something

Chapter two: Expressions

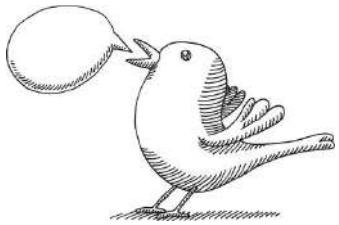
kick-start: (verb) to start something
long running: (adjective) something that lasts a long time (i.e. TV show)
all in all: expression meaning "to summarize" or "overall"
grasp something: to understand something well
lingo: slang, vocabulary

Chapter three: Expressions

handy: (adjective) something useful
showoff: someone who likes to brag or who likes to demonstrate their skills too much
take into one's heart: to accept someone lovingly
catchphrase: a phrase or expression used by a person or people frequently; usually something creative, that is easy to remember
flesh and blood: used to emphasize that someone is a living being
green eyed monster: representative of jealousy
get your money's worth: to profit as much as possible from something that one paid for
hobnob: to be friendly with someone important or famous
breaking the ice: do or say something to relieve tension or to get conversation going
dead as a doornail: used to express that something is quite dead
lay it on with a trowel/lay it on thick: to exaggerate wildly or overemphasize something
crossdressing: wearing clothing items commonly associated with the opposite sex

Chapter four: Expressions

the powers that be: the authorities, the people in charge
turn the world upside down: to change something completely, and is often upsetting
labour of love: a task done for pleasure, not reward
go the extra mile: make a special effort to achieve something
all things to all men: to please everyone
heart's desire: something that one wants very much
fight the good fight: to try to do what is right
filthy lucre: money won in a shameful way
root of the matter: the origin or cause of something
from strength to strength: to become more successful
the salt of the earth: used to describe someone who is very honest and reliable
the writing on the wall: a clear sign that something bad will happen
fire and brimstone: the threat of going to hell
to take root: (an idea or practice) starts to become accepted or used
to go to the ends of the earth: do anything in order to please someone
a leopard can't change its spots: it is impossible to change one's character
a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush: it is better to appreciate what one has than to risk everything to get more
a wolf in sheep's clothing: a person or thing that appears friendly but is really hostile
a fly in your ointment: a thing or person that spoils a good situation



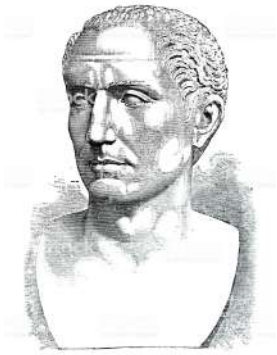
Activity Four: Act it out. Create a dialogue with your partner or teacher and act out the following situation. Try to use some of the expressions from above.

1. You are a roman soldier and you are invading a small English village. You try to talk to a pretty peasant girl in Latin but she speaks an early form of old English mixed with Celt.

2. You are Shakespeare. You meet a guy in a pub. He speaks in very vulgar terms about the barmaid. You like the expressions he uses and decide to use them in your next play!

3. You are a French Lord visiting an English Lord. You want to speak French but he wants to speak Old English. You are supposed to do business together but you end up getting on each others nerves!

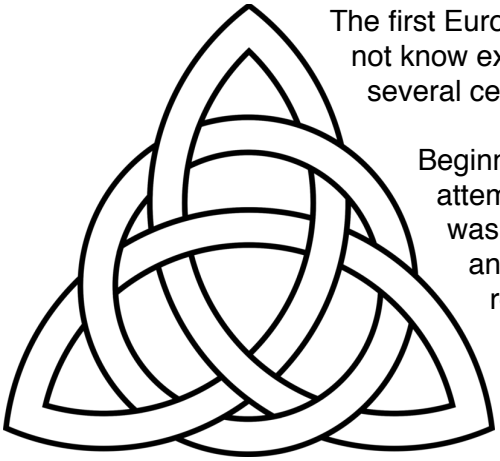
Activity Six: **Comprehension activity**. Read the text together, taking it in turns, and answer the comprehension questions.



The development of English can be subdivided into five periods:

1. **The beginning, the time before English arrived 55BC - 600AD**
2. **The old English period 600 - 1100**
3. **The middle English period 1100 - 1500**
4. **The early modern English period 1500 - 1700**
5. **The period of present day 1700 – today**

So it started more than 2000 years ago.



The first European speakers to arrive in England were probably the Celts. We do not know exactly the date of their arrival but they were already on the British Isles several centuries before the birth of Christ.

Beginning in 55 B.C., Julius Cesar, the Roman Emperor made several attempts to invade Britain but it was not before 50 A.C. that most of the land was under Roman domination. Hadrien's wall represents the border line, and England became Rome's western-most outpost and was gradually romanized.

After the Romans left Britain in 410 AC, Britain was invaded by the Picts form the north, and by the Jutes and Saxons from the east.

Throughout the 5th and 6th century the Brits were slowly forced into the mountain areas of Cumbria and Wales and the Germanic tribes replaced the Celtic peoples. The earliest period in the history of the English language is referred to as the old English period and dates back to the 5th century A.C. when Germanic tribes invaded Britain. These tribes were the Saxons, the Angles and the Jutes. The language from the old English period is often referred to as Anglo Saxon English.

The geographical extent of the Anglo Saxon language was approximately identical to today's area of England. Like its ancestor languages, old English was synthetic with numerous agglutinating tendencies. It inherited most phonological and morphological properties from Germanic and had a relatively free word order.

The beginning of the middle English period coincides with the Battle of Hastings. The defeat of the English, ruled by King Harold, in 1066 by William Duke of Normandy, marked a key event in the development of the English language. The Norman conquest brought massive changes to England's political and social structures, as well as an impact on the English language.

With the replacement of the English aristocracy by the Norman aristocracy, English became the language of the lower classes, especially among the nobility, in literature, in law and in official documentation. It essentially disappeared as a written language.

In 1204, King John lost his English possessions in France, leading to a gradual decline of French as an official language in England. By the 13th and 14th centuries, the children of the English nobility no longer learnt French in school. English became the new language of instruction. Even though French remained the official language well into the 14th century, two events of that time sealed its fate. The first was the black death; between 1348 and 1351, one third of England's population died. This led to enormous labour shortages and an increase in the prestige of English, which was the language of the working class. The second event was the 100 years war from 1337

to 1453, which led to a loss of all French possessions. Without holdings in France, learning French became obsolete.

The end of the middle English period is marked by several historical incidents; some of which had an enormous impact on the development of English. The introduction of the printing press to England in 1476 by William Caxton led to a standardisation of the English language. Then came the era of colonization in which the global spread of the English language was key. And finally, Henry VIII, inaugurated in 1509, cut links to Rome and the catholic church. By 1500, English slowly transformed from a regional language to a global system of communication.



Due to Latin and French influences, a new language had evolved by the 14th century; middle English was essentially germanic but included an extensive Roman vocabulary. Furthermore, the structural complexity of old English had disappeared. In the second half of the 14th century, poetry and prose became markers of middle English.

The beginning of the early modern English period coincides with the ascent of Henry VIII to the throne in 1509. The biggest influence on early modern English was the works of William Shakespeare. For this reason, early modern English is often alternatively referred to as Shakespearean English.

By the end of the middle English period most of today's syntactic and morphological patterns had been established. Early modern English was fairly analytic. The word order was fixed to subject, verb, object. The great change that classifies early modern English as a new period is mainly phonological in nature. Between 1450 and 1655, of the seven long vowels of middle English, two become diphthongized. This great vowel shift finally made English understandable to the modern ear. Thanks to the scientific revolution, many words borrowed from Greek and Latin entered the English language, many of which survived to this day.



By about 1700, The English language differed only slightly from present day English. The most important development was external, concerning the position of English among the languages of the world. From a regional language, it developed into the most widely used language in history. The first step towards the globalization of English was not until the end of the 16th century. By the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, in 1603, English literature boomed with the works of Spencer, Marlow, Shakespeare, while Francis Drake and Walter Rally had established English as a language outside of England

Today the spread of English around the world is often defined in terms of three concentric circles. The inner circle refers to traditional historical and social linguistic origins of English where it is a native language. The second circle includes countries colonized by Britain and the United States where English is spoken as a second language. The outer circle does not recognize English as an official language but does recognize the importance of English as a foreign language.

If there has ever been such a thing as a world language, English is one today. During fewer than 300 years, English developed from a regional language to a global language. Today English constitutes the most widely used individual language with more than 300 million native speakers and more than 1,5 billion official users.

Comprehension QUESTIONS:

Q1: Why did the English language nearly disappear following the Norman Invasion?

Q2: When did the English language become to resemble the language we speak today, and what changes made it possible?

Q3: What were two factors that lead to the globalization of the English language?

Q4: Why did many greek and latin words enter the English language in the 18th century?

Q5: What are the three “concentric circles” of the English language today?

Activity Seven: A very brief history.

With a new partner, or to you teacher, tell the story of the history of the English language as briefly as you can using as many of the different past tenses as you can!

Activity Eight: Horrible History. Just for fun listen to the song.

https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2vt2m3
Horrible Histories William Shakespeare Song



