



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

Conversation Preparation Guides

Title: Talking About the Recent Past

Topic: Describing the Past

Level: Intermediate

Practice on Your Own

- How does one talk about the past in the language you are studying? Are there one or more past verb tenses? Do you need to include a word or phrase that indicates the time, such as “yesterday,” “last week,” etc.? Are there distinctions between the recent past and the distant past, or between events that happened at a specific time and things that happened regularly or habitually in the past?
- In these activities, you will practice talking about the recent past. Make sure to review days and times if necessary.
- Practice talking about the recent past out loud. For example:
 - Can you describe what you did yesterday, including specific times?
 - What did you do this morning? What time did you get up, have breakfast, go to class, etc.?
- Also practice talking about what other people did in the recent past. Do you know what your friends did yesterday, or your parents? If not, make it up.
- Practice saying what you or others did NOT do in the recent past as well.
- Keep practicing throughout the week. Each day, practice saying what you did the day before.

Practice in Conversation Session

- You may do a number of different activities to practice talking about the recent past. Possibilities include:
 - Describing what you did yesterday, including specific times
 - Talking about what you did earlier today
 - Telling what someone else did this morning
 - Making up a story about what someone did yesterday (perhaps based on a photo or drawing)
 - Role play explaining to your professor why you missed an exam yesterday
 - Role play arriving at your study abroad destination, meeting your host family, and telling them about your trip. Maybe you had a delayed flight, missing luggage, etc.
 - Role play reporting a crime to the police, giving as much detail as possible
 - Role play a news reporter interviewing someone about a breaking news story

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- And there are many other possibilities...
- You may be asked to listen to your conversation partner or another student tell about what she/he did yesterday or earlier today and then repeat that information to someone else.
- To practice comprehension, your conversation partner may say different sentences or paragraphs and ask you to identify when something takes place (recent past, distant past, present, or future).