



Five College Center for the Study of World Languages

Conversation Preparation Guides

Title: Specific Events in the Past

Topic: Telling Stories

Level: Intermediate-Advanced

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 “last year,” “when I was 10 years old,” 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 specific events that happened in the past. For example, instead of talking about where your family used to go on vacation every year, you might describe a specific trip when you were 10 years old.
- Practice talking about past events out loud. For example:
 - What did you do last summer?
 - Can you describe a particular trip you took?
 - Think about stories from your childhood. Do you remember anything particularly exciting or scary that happened? Did you ever get very sick or badly injured? Did you win some type of contest or competition? Was there a particular holiday or birthday that was especially memorable?
- Also practice talking about what other people did in the past. Has a friend told you about a trip that you were jealous of? Have your parents or grandparents shared stories from their youth? Feel free to make up stories as well.
- Practice saying what you or others did NOT do in the past as well.

Practice in Conversation Session

- You may do a number of different activities to practice talking about specific events in the past. Possibilities include:
 - Talking about what you did last summer
 - Describing a particular trip you took
 - Telling a specific story from your semester/year abroad (real or imagined)
 - Sharing a story from your childhood
 - Role play talking to your advisor about the courses you took last semester and in the past (either your advisor here or at a university where you are studying abroad)

- Making up a story about what someone did in the past (perhaps based on a photo or drawing)
 - Role play interviewing someone for the school newspaper about a trip she/he took last semester as part of a class
 - Talking about how you got a job or internship, or about your college application process
 - Telling a story that a friend or family member shared with you
 - Describing the plot of a favorite book, movie, or TV show
 - And there are many other possibilities...
- You may be asked to listen to your conversation partner or another student tell a story from her/his past and then repeat the story to someone else.
 - To practice comprehension, your conversation partner may say different sentences or paragraphs and ask you to identify when something takes place (past, present, or future) and whether it is a one-time event or habitual.