

Saturday Night Live (NBC, USA), "Pitch Meeting"

Introduction

1. What is the Super Bowl?
2. Have you ever watched this event? Is it shown on TV in your country?
3. What is the most popular sports event in your country?

Imagine you are hanging out with your friends and decide to watch a long sports event on TV. Which of the following snacks would you prefer to eat while you are watching? First, match the names with the foods/drinks, then make your selection(s).



chocolate bar • corn or potato chips • dips • energy drink

popcorn • salted peanuts • soda

You are going to watch a comedy video in which advertising executives pitch their ideas to Cheetos, a corn chip company, for an advert to be played at half-time during the Super Bowl.

Watch the video for the first time and choose the best summary from the options below:

1. The video suggests that nowadays companies cynically use certain groups to look cool and sell their products.
2. The video is saying that now the world is so diverse, it is impossible to write the perfect ad because everyone is so different.
3. The video comments that there is not enough visibility for certain groups e.g. transgender people, in the media.

What do you think of this sketch? Talk about the questions below.

- Do companies in your country look to make "artistic" or "ground-breaking" advertisements? Can you think of any examples?
- Is there a degree of exploitation if a certain group within society is used for advertising?
- Do you think emotive adverts are more effective at selling products/services?
- Do you think all society is correctly represented in TV advertising?
- Optional.** Watch this 60 second advert for a bank, <https://youtu.be/siBRvC9YSc4>. Describe what you see in the advert. Do you like "serious" adverts?

Grammar, Describing Plots

Watch the video again and fill in the gaps below. Pay attention to the tense of the missing verbs.

"We open on a little immigrant girl; she's dusty, she's tired, she's _____ a long way."

"She _____ up and sees a wall."

"She sees her new country for the first time and she _____."

"...And they're like, *Just _____ Cheetos, mom!*"

"We open on a Mexican person _____ a sombrero..."

"Open on a bunch of friends _____ out..."

"Suddenly Chester the Cheetah _____ in..."

"We open on Chester the Cheetah, he _____ gauze around his chest..."

"One of her Cheetah friends enters the room, she _____ scared she will be judged..."

When describing the plots of films, books, adverts, what happens in a YouTube video *etc*, we normally use **present tenses** to describe what happens. This is different to personal anecdotes where **past tenses** are normally used.

Look at the quotes from the video above. Identify the tenses as either present simple, present continuous or present perfect (in some examples the participle is used, "we see a guy wearing...", for these say present continuous).

The examples above function in three different ways; describing the scene, describing actions happening at same time as the main action and main actions. Add the quotes above to the table.

Setting the scene	Actions happening at same time as the main action	Main actions
"She is tired"	"Just eating Cheetos, mom!"	"She looks up and sees a wall"

How to describe what happens in a story

The first two columns above *set the scene*; they describe what is happening at the time of the story but are not the *main actions*.

We describe **states** using stative verbs which almost always are used in "simple" tenses (*i.e. not in a continuous tense*). Here are some examples of common state verbs and how they could be used in a narrative:

<i>to be</i>	She is tired and hungry. She is seventeen. She is in Italy.
<i>to have</i>	She has a brother. She has a brand new car. She doesn't have any money.
<i>to like</i>	She likes going to the seaside. She doesn't like her step mother.
<i>to know</i>	She knows that he is going to leave her. She doesn't know who her father is.
<i>to seem</i>	She seems upset but he doesn't know why. He seems confused.
<i>to want</i>	She wants to escape. She doesn't want to work there anymore.
<i>to think (=opinion)</i>	She thinks he is cheating on her. He thinks she doesn't know.
<i>to remember</i>	She remembers her childhood but she can't remember his face.

*A longer list of stative verbs can be found at <https://turnitonenglish.wordpress.com/stative/>

If the verb is not a state verb, it is describing an action and should be expressed in a continuous tense. Here are some examples of how this could be used:

"Two men are **sitting** in a bar **drinking** beer when suddenly..."

"A woman is **walking** with her dog through the park. The dog is **going** very slowly..."

"A group of friends are **driving** in a car **making** plans about the weekend. One of the friends is **trying** to sleep..."

The **main actions** in a story are normally expressed in **present simple**. The main actions drive the story forward.

Look at the following jokes. Which is the funniest? Look at the tenses and discuss why the tenses are used with reference to the grammar above.

Some Texans are hanging out at a bar when an Oxford graduate walks in. "Howdy, stranger," one Texan says. "Where are you from?"
The Oxford graduate answers, "I come from a place where we do not end our sentences in prepositions."
"Oh, I'm sorry," replies the Texan. "Where are you from, jackass?"

A guy walks into a bar and finds a horse serving drinks. The horse asks, "What are you staring at? Haven't you ever seen a horse tending bar before?"
The guy says, "It's not that. I just never thought the parrot would sell the place."

A Red Sox fan walks into a Boston pub and spots a guy wearing a New York Yankees cap. "Drinks for everyone here, bartender!" shouts the Red Sox fan. "Except for Mr. Yankees!" PTO...

CONT...

The Yankees fan is smiling. He says, "Thank you!"

The Red Sox fan is angry, he orders another round of drinks for everyone except Mr. Yankees, who, again, thanks the man. This goes on for a while, until Mr. Red Sox asks the bartender, "What's the matter with that guy? I've ordered rounds of drinks for everyone but him, and all he does is thank me. Is he nuts?"

"No, he's not nuts," says the bartender. "He owns the place."

A guy walks into a bar. A beautiful woman is drinking cocktails at the other end of the bar. He walks up to her and says, "Where have you been all my life?"

"Well," she says, "for the first half of it, I wasn't even born."

Adapted from www.rd.com

Speaking

Do you ever watch re-cap videos on YouTube where people describe and discuss their favourite TV shows and movies?



THE STAR WARS RECAP SONG
2,053,304 views • 1 year ago



The Ultimate Game of Thrones Recap: Seasons 1-5
723,806 views • 11 months ago



Drag Race RU-VISITED with Novympia: All Stars 2, Ep 2
6,056 views • 5 months ago

Using what you have learnt about the tenses used to describe a plot, think about your favourite film or TV show and describe 2-3 scenes from it. Do not use character names; use descriptive terms instead, eg "a young French woman" instead of "Marie". You can refer to places by name, eg "Paris".

When you have finished, read your descriptions to the class and let them try to guess the movie you are describing. They can ask questions if they need some extra help.

Be kind to your classmates! Do not choose an obscure film or TV show! Try to choose something you think at least some of your colleagues will recognise.

Note: you may need to re-watch parts of the movie/TV show at home to write a good description so consider doing this activity as homework.