

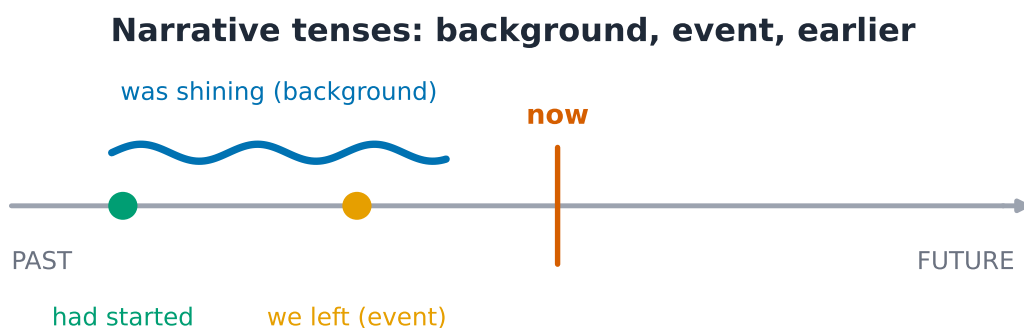
English Grammar · B2

English edition

Contents

1 Narrative tenses

1.1 Simple Past and Past Continuous



Narrative tenses on one timeline: past continuous background

When telling stories, English uses a set of **narrative tenses** in combination. The most basic two are:

- **Simple Past:** The **main actions** that advance the plot (one after another).
- **Past Continuous:** Setting the **background**, describing what was **happening** at that time.

The sun was shining when we left.

We set off while the sun was shining brightly. (Background + main action)

She was cooking when the phone rang.

Her phone rang while she was cooking.

Note A long background action uses the past continuous (*was cooking*); a short action interrupting it uses the simple past (*rang*).

1.2 Past Perfect for the Earlier Past

To indicate an action that occurred **before another past action**, use the **past perfect** (*had + past participle*).

When we arrived, the film had already started.

By the time we arrived, the film had already started. (Started first, arrived later)

Combination in Narrative:

- Earliest → Past Perfect (*had started*).

- Later → Simple Past (*arrived*).
- Background → Past Continuous (*was raining*).

Note These three tenses combined clearly convey the timeline of a story.

1.3 Past Perfect Continuous

The **past perfect continuous** (*had been* + *V-ing*) emphasizes an action that **continued up until** a specific point in the past.

She was tired because she had been working all day.

She was tired because she had been working all day.

Difference from Past Perfect:

- Past Perfect Continuous: Emphasizes the **continuous process / duration** (*had been working* — kept doing it).
- Past Perfect: Emphasizes **completion / result** (*had finished* — got it done).

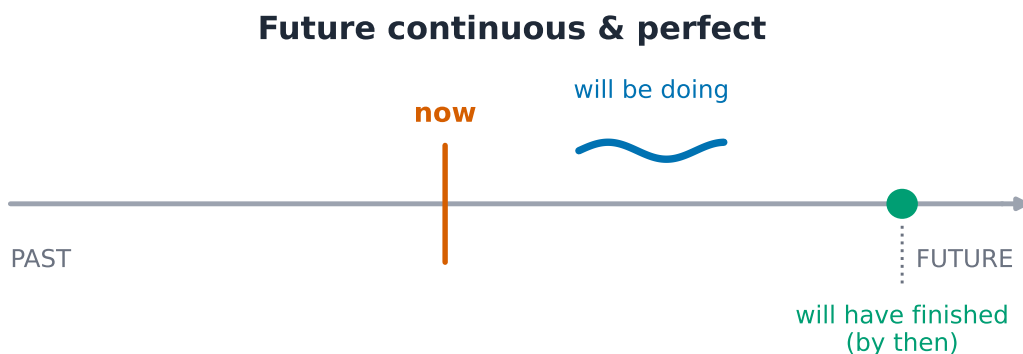
Note Stative verbs (*know*, *be*) do not take the continuous form: use *had known*, not *~~had been knowing~~*.

Common Errors

- × *~~When the phone rang, she cooked dinner.~~* (Meaning: “was cooking”) → ✓ *...she **was cooking** dinner.* — Using simple past implies she started cooking *after* the phone rang.
- × *~~While I walked home, I was meeting a friend.~~* → ✓ *While I **was walking** home, I **met** a friend.* — Long background actions use continuous tense; short actions use simple past. Do not reverse this.
- × *~~She had finished the report, then she had sent it.~~* → ✓ *She finished the report, then sent it.* — When narrating in chronological order, simple past is sufficient; past perfect is only used to look back at an earlier event.
- × *~~It was the first time I saw snow.~~* → ✓ *It was the first time I **had seen** snow.* — “First time” in past narration requires past perfect.

2 Future continuous and perfect

2.1 Future Continuous (will be + V-ing)



Future continuous and future perfect on one timeline: a wavy band after 'now'

Future Continuous indicates an action that will be **in progress at a specific moment in the future**.

Structure: will be + -ing

This time tomorrow, I will be flying to Paris.

At this time tomorrow, I will be flying to Paris.

Don't call at eight; we will be having dinner.

Don't call at eight; we'll be having dinner then.

Note: It is also frequently used to politely ask about someone's plans: *Will you be using the car tonight?*

2.2 Future Perfect (will have + past participle)

Future Perfect indicates an action that will be **completed before a specific moment in the future**.

Structure: will have + , often used with **by + future time**.

By next year, I will have finished my studies.

By next year, I will have graduated.

They will have left by the time you arrive.

They will have left by the time you arrive.

Note: Common collocation **by + time point** (e.g., by 2030, by then, by the time...), meaning “by that time.”

Common Errors

- × ~~By 2030, I will finish my degree.~~ → ✓ By 2030, I **will have finished** my degree. — “by + future time” is a strong signal for future perfect.
- × ~~This time tomorrow I will fly to Paris.~~ → ✓ ...I **will be flying** to Paris. — “Action in progress at a future moment” uses will be + -ing; will fly merely states a decision.
- × ~~I will have finish it by Friday.~~ → ✓ I will have **finished** it. — Past participle follows will have.
- × ~~When you will arrive, I will have cooked dinner.~~ → ✓ **When you arrive**, I will have cooked dinner. — Time clauses still take simple present; no exceptions even with advanced main clauses.

3 Third and mixed conditionals

3.1 Third Conditional

Past conditionals

Third	Mixed
past → past	past → present
<i>If I'd studied, I'd have passed</i>	<i>If I'd saved, I'd be rich now</i>

Past conditionals: reference card grid

Third Conditional discusses the **past**—an **unreal** assumption and its hypothetical result.

Structure: If + , would have +

If I had studied, I would have passed.

If I had studied, I would have passed. (But I didn't study, and I didn't pass)

Note: It expresses a hypothesis **contrary to past facts**; often conveys regret or blame. Abbreviations: I'd have, would've.

3.2 Mixed Conditional

Mixed Conditional mixes different times. The most common type is: **Past cause** → **Present result**.

Structure: If + , would +

If I had saved money, I would be rich now.

If I had saved money, I would be rich now. (Past cause, present result)

Note: Use **would + base verb** in the main clause (referring to present), not would have (which refers to the past).

3.3 Conditional Summary

Comparing all four conditionals together:

- **Zero Conditional:** If + present, present. (Universal truths)
- **First Conditional:** If + present, will + base verb. (Real future)
- **Second Conditional:** If + past, would + base verb. (Unreal present)
- **Third Conditional:** If + past perfect, would have + past participle. (Unreal past)

If I were you, I would apologize.

If I were you, I would apologize. (Second conditional)

Note: Identify the **tense of the if-clause**: present / past / past perfect determines the conditional type.

Common Errors

- × ~~If I would have known, I would have come.~~ → ✓ If I **had known**, I would have come. — Never use would in the if-clause; this is the most frequent error in spoken English (especially influenced by American TV dramas).
- × ~~If I had studied, I would pass the exam yesterday.~~ → ✓ ...I **would have passed** the exam. — Past results require would have + past participle.
- Mixed conditionals are not “random mixing”: Only logical combinations like **past cause** → **present result** (If I had saved money, I would be rich **now**) work correctly.
- Decoding abbreviations: I’d followed by **have + past participle** → I’d = I would; I’d followed directly by a **past participle** → I’d = I had. *I’d have helped* (would) vs. *I’d finished* (had).

4 wish and if only

4.1 wish + past simple (Regret about the present)

wish / if only

wish + past	wish + past perfect	wish + would
present regret	past regret	behaviour
<i>I wish I had a car</i>	<i>I wish I had studied</i>	<i>I wish you would listen</i>

wish / if only: reference card grid

wish expresses a **desire** or **regret**. For dissatisfaction with the **present**, use **past simple** (subjunctive) after wish.

Structure: wish +

I wish I had more time.

I wish I had more time. (But I don't)

She wishes she lived by the sea.

She wishes she lived by the sea. (But she doesn't)

Note: Like the second conditional, the verb **be** is commonly **were**: *I wish I were taller.*

4.2 wish + past perfect / would

Two advanced usages:

- Regret about the **past**: **wish** + (should have... but didn't).
- Dissatisfaction with **others' behavior** / desire for change: **wish** + + **would**.

I wish I had studied harder.

I wish I had studied harder. (Regret about the past)

I wish you would listen.

I wish you could listen. (Dissatisfaction with others' behavior)

Note: if only functions like wish but with stronger emphasis: *If only I had known!*

Common Errors

- × ~~I wish I have more time.~~ → ✓ I wish I **had** more time. — Tense must “step back” after wish.
- × ~~I wish I studied harder last year.~~ → ✓ I wish I **had studied** harder last year. — Regrets about the past require past perfect.
- × ~~I wish I would be taller.~~ → ✓ I wish I **were** taller. — wish + would applies only to dissatisfaction with **others’ behavior**, never oneself.
- × ~~I wish you will pass the exam.~~ → ✓ I **hope** you pass the exam. — Wishes for real possibilities use hope; wish + clause expresses “unreality” (except fixed phrases like *I wish you good luck*).

5 Advanced passive

5.1 Passive Voice in Various Tenses

Passive across tenses

present is / are + p.p. <i>is made</i>	perfect has been + p.p. <i>has been built</i>	future will be + p.p. <i>will be opened</i>
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Passive across tenses: reference card grid

The passive voice can be used in **any tense**—simply change the form of **be**, which is always followed by a **past participle**.

Tense	Passive Structure
Present Simple	am / is / are + past participle
Past Simple	was / were + past participle
Present Perfect	has / have been + past participle
Future	will be + past participle
Modal	can / must be + past participle

The bridge has been repaired.

This bridge has already been repaired. (Present Perfect Passive)

The work will be done soon.

The work will soon be completed. (Future Passive)

Note: Regardless of the tense, the core of the passive structure is always **be (changing) + past participle (unchanged)**.

5.2 Reported Speech (it is said that...)

When reporting **general opinions or rumors** without specifying who said it, we often use the **passive reporting** structure:

- **It is said / believed / thought that** + clause.

- **Subject + is said / believed to + infinitive / base verb.**

It is said that he is very rich.

He is said to be very rich.

He is said to be very rich.

It is said that he is very rich. (Same meaning, subject moved forward)

Note: Such structures are common in news and formal writing, allowing for objective reporting of unverified information.

Common Errors

- × ~~The bridge has repaired.~~ → ✓ The bridge **has been repaired**. — In the perfect passive, *been* is easily omitted; without *been*, it means “the bridge repaired something else”.
- × ~~The problem must be solve.~~ → ✓ The problem must be **solved**. — Modal passive = modal verb + be + past participle.
- × ~~He is said that he is rich.~~ → ✓ **It is said that** he is rich. / **He is said to be** rich. — The two “said” structures cannot be combined.
- Additional: There is also a continuous passive — am / is / are **being** + past participle: *The road **is being repaired**.* (*The road is currently being repaired.*)

6 Reported questions and commands

6.1 Indirect Questions

Reported questions & commands

Questions	Commands
statement order	(not) to + verb
<i>She asked where I lived</i>	<i>He told me to wait</i>

Reported questions & commands: reference card grid

When reporting a **question**, the word order changes back to **statement word order** (subject + verb), and the question mark is removed.

- **Yes/No questions** → introduced by **if / whether**.
- **Wh- questions** → introduced by the original **question word** (what, where...).

She asked where I lived.

She asked me where I lived. (Original: "Where do you live?")

He asked if I was busy.

He asked me if I was busy. (Original: "Are you busy?")

Note: In indirect questions, auxiliary verbs **do / does / did** are not used, and there is no inversion: ~~where did I live~~ × → where I lived ✓.

6.2 Indirect Commands and Requests

When reporting a **command, request, or suggestion**, use **tell / ask / advise + someone + (not) to + base verb**.

She told me to wait.

She told me to wait a moment. (Original: "Wait.")

He asked me not to be late.

He asked me not to be late. (Original: "Please don't be late.")

Note: Negative commands use **not to**: asked me **not to** go (asked me not to go).

Common Errors

- × ~~He asked me am I busy.~~ → ✓ He asked me **if I was** busy. — You cannot simply insert the original sentence; it must become *if* + statement word order.
- × ~~She said me to wait.~~ → ✓ She **told me** to wait. — For reporting commands, use *tell / ask / advise + person + to do*; *say* cannot take this construction.
- × ~~He told me don't be late.~~ → ✓ He told me **not to be** late. — Negative commands become *not to*; *don't* cannot be inserted directly into reported speech.
- × ~~She suggested me to go home.~~ → ✓ She suggested **that I (should) go** home. / She suggested **going** home. — *suggest* cannot be followed by “person + to do”.

7 Past modals

7.1 must have / can't have (Speculation)

Past modals

must have	should have	might have
sure deduction	regret	possibility
<i>He must have left</i>	<i>I should have studied</i>	<i>They might have missed it</i>

Past modals: reference card grid

When speculating about the **past**, use **modal verb + have + past participle**.
When you are certain:

- **must have + past participle**: Must have been... (in the past).
- **can't have + past participle**: Cannot have been... (in the past).

He must have forgotten.

He must have forgotten. (A definite positive speculation about the past)

She can't have seen us.

She can't have seen us.

Note: Negative speculation uses **can't have**, not *mustn't have*.

7.2 should have (Regret, Criticism)

should have + past participle indicates "should have done but didn't"

I should have studied harder.

I should have studied harder. (Regret)

You shouldn't have said that.

You shouldn't have said that. (Criticism)

Note: It refers to something not done (or done) in the past that is now regretted.

7.3 could have / might have (Possibility)

could have / might have + past participle indicates something that was **possible** in the past (but not certain).

They might have missed the train.

They may have missed the train.

It could have been worse.

Things could have been worse.

Note: could have can also mean “**could have done but didn’t**”: *I could have helped, but I didn’t.* (I could have helped, but I didn’t.)

Common Errors

- × ~~He must forgot.~~ → ✓ He **must have forgotten**. — Speculation about the past requires “modal + have + past participle”; there is no form like “must forgot”.
- × ~~I should have went.~~ / Mishearing as oral speech ~~should of gone~~ → ✓ I should **have gone**. — After have comes the past participle; connected speech sounds like “of,” but it must be written as “have.”
- × ~~I could help you yesterday, but I was busy.~~ → ✓ I **could have helped** you yesterday... — “Could have done” expresses “could have but didn’t”; could + base verb only expresses general ability in the past.
- × ~~You should had called.~~ → ✓ You should **have** called. — After a modal verb always comes the base form “have,” never “had.”

8 Relative clauses (defining and non-defining)

8.1 Restrictive vs. Non-restrictive

Defining vs non-defining

Defining	Non-defining
essential · no commas	extra · commas
<i>The man who called ...</i>	<i>My boss, who is kind, ...</i>

Defining vs non-defining: reference card grid

Relative clauses are divided into two types, distinguished by whether the information is **essential**:

- **Restrictive** (defining): Provides **essential** information, identifying “which one,” with **no comma**.
- **Non-restrictive** (non-defining): Provides **extra** information; removing it does not affect identification, so it is **set off by commas**.

The man who called is my boss.

The man who called is my boss. (Restrictive: identifies which man)

My boss, who is very kind, called me.

My boss called me, and he is a very nice person. (Non-restrictive: supplementary information)

Note: A **comma** signals a non-restrictive clause, indicating the information is an aside.

8.2 Commas and Which

There are also differences in the choice of **relative pronouns** between the two types of clauses:

- **Restrictive:** Use *who* / *that* for people, *which* / *that* for things; may be omitted when functioning as an object.

- **Non-restrictive:** Use **who** for people, **which** for things; **that cannot be used**, and it **cannot be omitted**.

This book, which I read last year, is excellent.

*I read this book last year, which was excellent. (Non-restrictive, use *which*)

Note: that is never used in non-restrictive clauses: ~~My boss, that is kind, ...~~
 × → My boss, **who** is kind, ... ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~~My mother who lives in Beijing is a teacher.~~ → ✓ My mother**, who** lives in Beijing**, ** is a teacher. — Unique people or things (mother, Beijing, sun) can only take non-restrictive clauses; omitting commas implies “you have several mothers”.
- × ~~He failed the exam, it made his parents angry.~~ → ✓ ...the exam**, which** made his parents angry. — A comma cannot directly join two sentences; a comma plus *which* refers to the entire preceding situation.
- × ~~My boss, I met yesterday, is kind.~~ → ✓ My boss, **who(m)** I met yesterday, is kind. — The relative pronoun in a non-restrictive clause **cannot be omitted**.
- Commas must appear **in pairs**: When a clause is inserted mid-sentence, it requires commas on both sides: *My boss, who is kind, called me.*

9 The causative

9.1 have something done

The causative

have	get
+ thing + past participle	more informal
<i>I had my hair cut</i>	<i>I got my car fixed</i>

The causative: reference card grid

The **causative structure** expresses having someone else do something for you, rather than doing it yourself.

Structure: have + +

I had my hair cut yesterday.

I got my hair cut yesterday. (Not by myself)

We are having our house painted.

We are getting the house painted. (By someone else)

Note: Pay attention to word order: **have + object + past participle**. *I had my car repaired.* (I sent it to be fixed) differs from *I repaired my car.* (I did it myself).

9.2 get something done

get + object + past participle functions similarly to *have*, but is more **informal**.

I need to get my phone fixed.

*I need to get my phone repaired.

She got her photo taken.

She got a photo taken. (By someone else)

Note: In causative structures, *have* and *get* are largely interchangeable; *get* carries a more casual, conversational tone.

Common Errors

- × ~~I cut my hair yesterday.~~ (Actually at the salon) → ✓ I **had my hair cut** yesterday. — Using the active voice implies you cut it yourself with scissors.
- × Incorrect word order: ~~I had cut my hair~~ is the past perfect tense (“I had already cut it before then”), not causative; the causative form is *have + **object** + past participle*: I had **my hair** cut.
- × ~~I had my hair cutted.~~ → ✓ ...cut. — The past participle in the causative structure must also be correct: *cut-cut-cut* remains unchanged.
- To ask **someone** to do it: *have + person + **base form**, get + person + **to do***: *I’ll have John **fix** it. / I’ll get John **to fix** it.*

10 Contrast linkers

10.1 although, though, even though

Contrast linkers

although	despite	however
+ a clause	+ a noun / -ing	+ a new sentence
<i>although it rained</i>	<i>despite the rain</i>	<i>... However, ...</i>

Contrast linkers: reference card grid

These conjunctions express **contrast** / **concession** (“although...but...”). They are followed by **a complete sentence** (subject + verb).

- **although** / **though**: Although. **even though**: Stronger tone, meaning “even if / despite the fact that”.

Although it was raining, we went out.

*Although it was raining, we still went out.

He passed, even though he hadn’t studied.

*Even though he didn’t study, he still passed.

Note: *though* can also appear at the **end of a sentence** to mean “however” (informal):
It’s expensive. I like it, though.

10.2 despite, in spite of

despite and **in spite of** have the same meaning as *although*, but they are followed by **nouns / gerunds, not complete sentences**.

Despite the rain, we went out.

*Despite the rain, we still went out.

In spite of being tired, she kept working.

*Despite being very tired, she continued working.

Note: Key distinction: *although* + **sentence**; *despite* / *in spite of* + **noun** / **-ing**.
~~despite it was raining~~ × → despite the rain ✓.

10.3 however, nevertheless

however and **nevertheless** are **conjunctive adverbs** that connect two sentences, usually placed at the **beginning of a sentence followed by a comma**.

It was expensive. However, we bought it.

*It was expensive. However, we still bought it.

Note: *However* typically forms its own sentence separated by a comma; do not use it to directly join two clauses like *but*.

Common Errors

- × ~~Although it was raining, but we went out.~~ → ✓ Keep only one: **Although** it was raining, we went out. / It was raining, **but** we went out. — Chinese “although...but...” appears in pairs, but English allows only one.
- × ~~Despite of the rain...~~ → ✓ **despite** the rain / **in spite of** the rain — *despite* never takes *of*; *in spite* always takes *of*; do not mix them.
- × ~~Even he studied hard, he failed.~~ → ✓ **Even though** he studied hard... — *even* alone is not a conjunction; use *even though* / *even if*.
- × ~~It was expensive, however we bought it.~~ → ✓ It was expensive. **However**, we bought it. (Or using a semicolon: ...expensive*; however,** we...) — *However* cannot join two clauses with just a comma like *but*.

11 Articles (advanced)

11.1 Generic vs Specific Reference

Choosing an article

a / an	the	(none)
one, not specific	the specific one	general / names
<i>a book · an apple</i>	<i>close the door</i>	<i>I like music</i>

Choosing an article: reference card grid

At B2 level, the difficulty with articles lies in distinguishing **generic reference** from **specific reference**:

- **Generic reference** (whole categories): Plural / uncountable nouns, **no *the***.
- **Specific reference** (particular ones): **Use *the***.

Tigers are dangerous.

*Tigers are dangerous. (Refers to tigers in general, no *the*)

The tigers at the zoo are sleepy.

*The tigers in the zoo are sleepy. (Specific, use *the*)

Note: Abstract nouns are also used without *the* for generic reference: *Love is important.* (Love is important.) But *the love of a mother* uses *the* when referring specifically.

11.2 Fixed Collocations

In many collocations, article usage is **fixed** and must be memorized as a whole:

- **No article:** go to bed / school / work, by car / bus, at home, have breakfast.
- **Use *the*:** in the morning, play the piano, the same, listen to the radio.

I go to work by bus.

*I go to work by bus. (Neither *go to work* nor *by bus* takes an article)

Note: These collocations lack much logical reasoning; **memorizing them as fixed phrases** is most effective.

Common Errors

- × ~~the China / the Japan~~ → ✓ China / Japan; but ✓ **the** US, **the** UK, **the** Netherlands, **the** Philippines — Only countries with plural forms or “organizational” names take *the*.
- × ~~Most of people agree.~~ → ✓ **Most people** agree. / **Most of the** people in this room agree. — *most* goes directly before a noun; *most of* must be followed by *the* / *my* / *these* etc.
- Distinguish (British English): be **in hospital** (admitted as a patient) vs. go to **the hospital** (go to the building, e.g., to visit someone). The same applies to in prison / at school.
- **the + adjective** refers to a class of people: *The rich should help **the poor**.*

12 Emphasis

12.1 Emphasis with so and such

Emphasis: so / such / do

so + adj	such + noun	do + verb
so cold	such a day	emphasis
<i>so cold that ...</i>	<i>such a good film</i>	<i>I do like it!</i>

Emphasis: so / such / do: reference card grid

so and **such** are used to intensify meaning ('so...that' or 'such...that'), often followed by **that** to introduce a result.

- **so + adjective / adverb** (+ that ...).
- **such + (a/an) + adjective + noun** (+ that ...).

It was so cold that the lake froze.

It is so cold that the lake has frozen over.

It was such a good film that I cried.

That movie was so good that I cried.

Note: Follow **so** with an **adjective** (so cold); follow **such** with a **noun phrase** (such a good film).

12.2 So do I, Neither do I

To express "Me too" or "Me neither," English uses a short inverted structure where the auxiliary verb must **match** the previous sentence:

- Affirmative agreement: **So + auxiliary verb + subject** (So do I / So am I / So can I).
- Negative agreement: **Neither + auxiliary verb + subject** (Neither do I / Neither am I).

"I like tea." — So do I.

“I like tea.” — “Me too.”

“I can’t swim.” — Neither can I.

“I can’t swim.” — “Neither can I.”

Note: The auxiliary verb must match the tense/verb of the previous sentence: if the previous sentence uses *are* → So **are** they; if it uses *don’t* → Neither **do** I.

Common Errors

- × “I love this song.” — ~So am I.~ → ✓ So **do** I. — The agreeing auxiliary must match the previous sentence: main verbs → *do / does / did*; *be* → *am / is*; *can* → *can*.
- × “I don’t like it.” — ~Me too.~ → ✓ **Me neither.** / **Neither do I.** — Do not use *too* for negative agreements.
- × “I can’t swim.” — ~So can’t I.~ → ✓ **Neither can I.** — Negative inversion begins with *neither / nor*, never *so + negative*.
- To emphasize “really,” avoid using *very + verb*: × ~I very like it.~ → ✓ I **do** like it. / I **really** like it. — Placing the auxiliary *do* before the verb creates emphasis.