

50 natural English Tips

5. "WHAT DID YOU DO AT THE WEEKEND?"



natural English *How was ...?*

How was your weekend?

It was **lovely**. How was yours? (great)

It was **terrible**. (really bad)

It was **nice**. (fine)

A bit boring. (not very interesting)



natural English *link words: then / after that*

We had a drink. **Then** we went to the cinema.

OR We had a drink, **and then** we went to the cinema.

I went shopping. **After that**, I met my sister.

OR I went shopping, **and after that**, I met my sister.



natural English *anyway, so anyway*

In spoken English, you use *anyway* or *so anyway* when you want to begin the next part of a story, or go back to the main story.

Janet didn't know about it. **So anyway**, we got in the helicopter, and ...

We drank the champagne. **Anyway**, we landed and ...



natural English *realize, remember, find out*

The past perfect is often used after the verbs *realize*, *remember*, and *find out*. Time markers, e.g. *suddenly*, *later*, *before*, and *already* are very common here.

I **suddenly remembered** (that) I'd left the gas on.

She **realized** (that) she'd met him **before**.

I **found out later** (that) he'd been in prison.

When the film started I **realized** (that) I'd **already** seen it.



natural English *which clauses*

When you state facts, you can add a comment / opinion using a *which* clause.

She invited me to dinner, **which was kind of her**.

Our team lost the match, **which was disappointing**.

They got up at 5.00 every morning, **which was crazy**.

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What's the context?

This language could be used for telling people:

- long stories
- short and simple stories
- about your weekend, your holiday, your exam...anything!
- how you feel about things that happened to you

Look through the *natural English* boxes above. Find *natural English* phrases that you could use in each of the following contexts:

Example: short and simple stories – We had an amazing Chinese meal, **and then** we went to the cinema. **After that** we went for a romantic walk through the city, but it rained, **which was a bit disappointing.**



Study the *natural English* phrases

1. When telling stories, it's good to link your ideas into long sentences. Use *natural English* words, phrases and structures from this email to join two (or three) sentences into one. You'll need to study the *natural English* boxes carefully first.

Example: I didn't close the windows. I remembered this later. **I suddenly remembered** (that) I hadn't closed the windows.

a) We won the football match. We had a really big party to celebrate.
We won ... _____

b) I forgot to ask him for his phone number. I realized this when I got home.
When I got home I ... _____

c) Tatiana came round and helped me paint the flat. That was really kind of her.
Tatiana ... _____

d) I did my homework. I checked my emails. I called my uncle.
I did ... _____

e) Paul broke his leg in two places. I found this out later.
I found out ... _____

f) He gave me a lift on his motorbike. It was really exciting.
He gave me ... _____

g) We talked a lot about what to do. Anyway, we eventually decided to go back home.
We talked ... _____

2. Which weekends in exercise 1 do you think were:

- lovely?
- terrible?
- a bit boring?
- nice?

Example: I think the weekend in g) was **terrible.**

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Activate the *natural English* phrases

'Weekend stories'

Work with a partner. Look at the weekend story 'skeletons' below. Choose one of them: this is what happened to you at the weekend.

A party

On Saturday night you went to a party.
People looked at you in a strange way.
When you got home you suddenly realized... (What?)
How did you feel?
What did you do on Sunday?

A phone call

You went to bed at 11.30pm on Saturday night.
The phone rang at midnight.
You answered it. (Who was it?)
The person on the phone told you something. (What did you find out?)
How did you feel?
What did you do on Sunday?

A shopping trip

On Saturday you went shopping.
You paid £50 for a shirt.
Later when you got home you found out something.
(What?)
How did you feel?
What did you do on Sunday?

A journey

On Saturday you drove 150km to see your sister on her birthday.
When you got there you remembered (what?)
What did you do?
How did you feel?
What did you do on Sunday?

Plan your weekend story with your partner. Turn your story skeleton into a full story by using your imagination, adding details and answering the questions in brackets. Include some *natural English* phrases from this email. Practise telling your story with your partner.

Decide with your partner what you will say when someone asks you '**How was your weekend?**'

- **It was nice.**
- **A bit boring.**
- **It was terrible.**
- **It was lovely.**

Work in small groups with people who have prepared different stories. Tell your stories. Start the conversations like this:

Example:

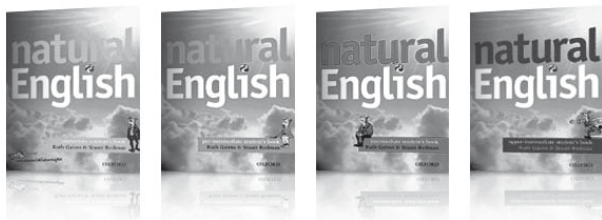
How was your weekend?

It was terrible.

Why? What happened?

Well, on Saturday night I watched the football on TV and **then** I went to bed at 11.30pm...

Extension: Use the same story skeleton, but add completely different details, so that your weekend changes from lovely to terrible or from a bit boring to nice.



These tips are brought to you by *natural English*, the course where students use English naturally.