Time expressions

on time · in time
at the end · in the end

A2 grammar lesson + extensive practice

Can you choose the expression that gives the right meaning?

Warm-up: four short situations

Choose one expression for each situation. Discuss with a partner first.

A The train arrives at 09:00, exactly as planned.

B You arrive before the film starts, so you can buy popcorn.

C You read the final page of a book.

D After thinking carefully, you choose the blue jacket.

Expressions: on time · in time · at the end · in the end

Say the whole sentence, not only the expression.

On time

Use it for something punctual or according to a schedule.

ON TIME

at the expected time

The lesson starts on time at 10:00.

Think: timetable, appointment, deadline, meeting, bus, train

We use “on time” when the planned time is important.

The flight landed at 18:30 as scheduled. It landed on time.

In time

Use it when there is still enough time before something happens.

IN TIME

soon enough; before it is too late

We got to the station in time to catch the train.

Useful patterns

in time for + noun
in time to + verb
just in time = at the last possible moment

The cake arrived just in time for the party.

Practice

Choose on time or in time.

1. The conference begins at 9:00. Please arrive _____.
2. My alarm worked, so I got to work _____ for the meeting.
3. The bus was late, but it arrived _____ for the timetable.
4. The teacher always starts class _____.
5. We submitted the project at 23:55. The deadline was midnight. We submitted it _____.

On time or in time?

Ask one question before you choose.

ON TIME

Was there an expected or scheduled time?

Yes → on time

IN TIME

Was it early enough to do something before it was too late?

Yes → in time

Compare: The train arrived on time. / We arrived in time to catch the train.

Practice

Complete with on time, in time, or just in time.

1. Hurry! We need to get there _____ to see the first song.
2. The 08:15 train usually leaves _____.
3. I finished the report _____ for my boss to read it before lunch.
4. Maya ran to the gate and arrived _____ to board the plane.
5. Our guests arrived _____, exactly at 7:30.
6. Can you send the card _____ for her birthday?

At the end

Use it for the final part or final point of something.

AT THE END

in the final part of a time, place, event or object

At the end of the film, everyone clapped.

Most common pattern: at the end of + noun

at the end of the day · at the end of the street · at the end of the book

There is a café at the end of the road.

Practice

Complete with at the end (of).

1. We have a short quiz _____ every lesson.
2. There is a supermarket _____ the street.
3. _____ the match, the players shook hands.
4. Please write your name _____ the email.
5. Our holiday finishes _____ August.

In the end

Use it to say what finally happened or what someone finally decided.

IN THE END

finally; eventually; after a process or situation

In the end, we took a taxi because it was raining.

It often comes at the beginning or middle of a sentence.

In the end, we stayed at home.
We discussed it for an hour and, in the end, we agreed.

In the end describes a result. It does not describe a place or a point in time.

At the end or in the end?

One expression names a final point. The other gives the final result.

AT THE END (OF)

final point in a thing, place or time

**At the end of the concert,
we went home.**

IN THE END

final result after a situation

**We wanted to walk.
In the end, we took a taxi.**

“of + noun” is a helpful signal for at the end.

Practice

Choose at the end or in the end.

1. _____ the story, the detective finds the missing ring.
2. We compared three phones and _____ bought the cheapest one.
3. There is a small park _____ this road.
4. _____ the school year, students receive their reports.
5. The weather looked bad, but _____ it was sunny all day.
6. Read the questions again _____ the test.

Practice

Mixed challenge: choose the best expression.

1. The restaurant opens at 7:00. We arrived at 7:00, exactly _____.
2. I got to the theatre _____ to buy a drink before the play.
3. _____ the book, the main character goes home.
4. We looked for the keys everywhere and _____ found them under the sofa.
5. The delivery arrived _____, so the birthday present was ready before the party.
6. Our teacher gives us homework _____ every class.
7. The plane left late, but we still arrived _____ for the wedding.
8. After a long discussion, _____ the team chose Friday.

Speaking practice: a race against time

Work in pairs. Student A asks. Student B answers with a full sentence.

Student A	Student B
1. Your friend arrives at the station at 10:00. The train leaves at 10:05.	
2. You watch a film. What happens in the final scene?	
3. You need a present for a birthday tomorrow. When must you buy it?	
4. You cannot choose between two cafés. What happens after you discuss it?	

Try to use all four expressions across the conversation.

Correct the mistake

Each sentence has one wrong expression. Rewrite it correctly.

1. I got to the airport on time to catch my flight.
2. In the end of the show, the singer thanked the audience.
3. The bus arrived in time at 8:30, exactly as the timetable said.
4. At the end, we decided to stay for dinner.
5. Please finish the exercise in the end of the lesson.

Quick review

Match the meaning to the expression.

punctually / as planned	**on time**
early enough before it is too late	**in time**
final point of a place, time or event	**at the end (of)**
final result or decision	**in the end**

Final check: make one sentence with each expression.