

82 Ordering events



We saw the hurricane warning **when** we turned on the TV. **As soon as** we knew the storm was coming, we closed the shutters on the windows. **Then** we went to the basement and stayed there **until** it had passed over us.

1 Common linking words for time

	LINKING WORDS	EXAMPLES
a series of events	<i>before</i> <i>after</i>	<i>We closed the shutters before we went to the basement.</i> <i>We went to the basement after we closed the shutters.</i>
one event immediately after another	<i>as soon as</i> <i>when</i>	<i>As soon as we knew the storm was coming, we closed the shutters.</i> <i>We saw the warning when we turned on the TV.</i>
event(s) in a period of time	<i>when</i> <i>while</i> <i>during (+ noun)</i> <i>until</i>	<i>Mandy saw her cousin when she was in New York.</i> <i>I sent a lot of emails while I was on holiday.</i> <i>I sent a lot of emails during my holiday.</i> <i>(X during I was on holiday.)</i> <i>We stayed in the basement until the storm had passed.</i>
at the same time	<i>while</i>	<i>Luisa fed the baby while Daniel made the supper.</i>

We can use *after/before + -ing verb* to show the order of events:

*We went to the basement **after closing** the shutters.*

***After closing** the shutters, we went to the basement.*

*We closed the shutters **before going** to the basement.*

When, before, after and while/during can mean 'whenever', or 'every time that':

*I always get headaches **when** the weather's hot. (every time that the weather is hot)*

*Jackie used to feel nervous **during** exams. (every time she took an exam)*

- ⚠ After linking words which refer to the future we use the present tense, not *will* or *going to*:
~~*X I'll phone you as soon as I will arrive.*~~ ✓ *I'll phone you **as soon as** I arrive.*

2 Describing a series of events

When we describe a series of events in the past, we can use the linking words *first, then, after that, afterwards, later, in the end* and *eventually* (meaning 'after a long time'):

***First**, we closed the window shutters. **Then** we went to the basement and waited there.*

***Eventually**, we were able to go back upstairs. **Later**, we went outside to look at the damage.*

- ⚠ We put these linking words at the beginning or end of the sentence, not in the middle:
~~*X Steve paid the bill after that we left the restaurant.*~~
 ✓ *Steve paid the bill. **After that**, we left the restaurant.*
 ✓ *Steve paid the bill. We left the restaurant **after that**.*

We can use *first, next, then, after that* and *finally* in a series of instructions:

*Put the DVD into the machine. **Then** press 'select channel'. **After that**, you can choose ...*

***First**, put the potatoes in a pan of boiling water. **Then** slice the tomatoes. **Next**, take an onion ...*

NATURAL ENGLISH We don't usually use more than two or three of these linking expressions in a paragraph.

More on linking words in written English ➤ Unit 101