

RW.7 · Key writing: a three-picture story

A2 Key and B1 Preliminary (KET, PET) · Cambridge English · A2 Key (KET)

What this topic covers

Part 7: write a short story of **at least 35 words** from **three pictures**. The pictures show a beginning, a middle and an end; you supply the words.

- Look at all three pictures **before** writing: the story is already there – you are narrating it, not inventing it.
- Memory hook: the pictures are a **comic with no speech bubbles**. You are the bubbles.
- The marks reward: covering all three pictures, past tenses used correctly, and connectors that move time forward.
- This is where the A2/B1 grammar pays you back: the **past simple** carries the events, **connectors** carry the time.

The story machine

1. Name the pictures: *a rainy street – a broken umbrella – a warm shop*. Three nouns = your skeleton .
2. One or two sentences per picture, past simple, in order.
3. Add one feeling and one connector per picture: *suddenly, then, after that, luckily, finally*.

A model:

It was raining hard, and Tom was walking to school. Suddenly, his umbrella broke in the wind! He was cold and wet. Luckily, a small café was open, so he went in and had a hot chocolate. He arrived at school late, but happy.

Five sentences, three pictures, one broken umbrella. 60 words – safely over 35.

The tense toolkit for stories

Tool	Job in the story
past simple	the events: <i>his umbrella broke</i>
past continuous	the background: <i>it was raining</i>
a feeling adjective	<i>cold, wet, worried, happy</i>
a connector	<i>suddenly, then, luckily, finally</i>

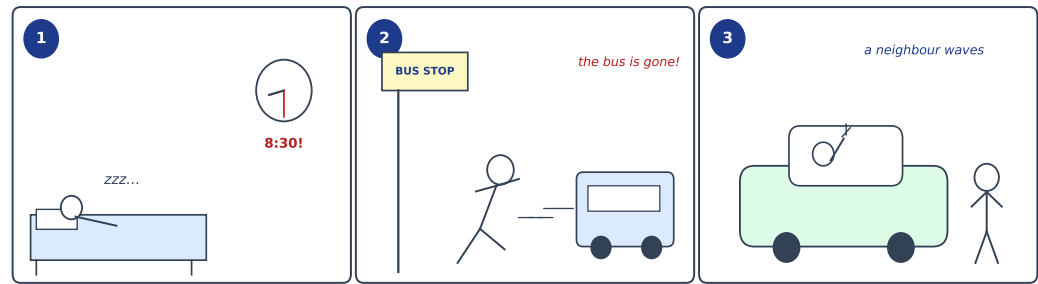
- △ The whole story lives in the **past**. Don't drift into the present halfway: "*He goes into the café*" × – *He **went** into the café*.

- One background sentence (*it was raining*) upgrades the story from a police report to a film. The B2 narrative cameras work at A2 too.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **Don't describe; narrate**. "*There is a boy. He has an umbrella.*" is a description, not a story. Stories move: *It was raining. His umbrella broke. He found a café*.
- △ **Past tense consistency** is the big mark-loser. Write, then re-read once, checking only the verbs: every event in the past simple.
- △ **The third picture matters**. Students spend so long on picture 1 that picture 3 gets one sad sentence. Budget : roughly equal lines per picture.
- △ **Spelling of story words**: *suddenly, finally, luckily* – learn the spellings; they appear in every story you will ever write.

Try it



Author-drawn practice pictures, not official Cambridge artwork. In the exam the three pictures are real drawings; here they are the three panels above. Write 35+ words. Model:

Jack woke up late and felt terrible. He ran to the bus stop, but the bus had already left. Luckily, his neighbour saw him and drove him to school. Jack was on time – and very grateful .

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. Minimum length? – **35 words**. Over is safe; under loses marks.
2. "*He goes into the café*" in a past story – × → **went**. The story lives in the past.
3. The pictures show rain – **open with the background**: *It was raining*. The film, not the police report.
4. Picture 3 gets one sad sentence – × → **equal lines per picture**. The ending carries marks.
5. *suddenly / finally / luckily* – **learn the spellings**. They appear in every story.