

Magazine article: describing past events

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- Which of these stressful situations have you experienced? Number them 1–3, with 3 being the one which makes you most stressed.
 Taking exams
 Moving to a new town or city
 Falling out with a friend
- Are there any other common stressful situations that should be included in the list? What are they?

2 Read the exam task and Maria's answer. Match the statements (a–d) with the gaps (1–4).

- a Laura found three ways of coping.
- b Changing schools can be a major challenge.
- c There are other useful strategies.
- d There were several reasons for this.

EXAM TASK You are on an exchange trip to a school in the UK and have read the following advertisement in the school magazine. Write an article of at least 100 words in which you:

- ▶ describe a time when someone you know changed schools,
- ▶ explain why the change was stressful,
- ▶ say how this person coped with it and suggest other ways of coping.

CHANGING SCHOOLS

Have you ever changed schools? Could you help others who have just started at a new school or college? We are looking for short articles about how to cope with the stress of changing schools for our next issue.

- b* For example, two years ago, Laura moved to my school and she found the move very stressful initially.
- d* She did not know anyone and she missed her friends from her former school. Not surprisingly, she felt sad and lonely. 'I felt very different from everyone,' she said. 'I didn't know what my classmates were talking about a lot of the time.' Another problem was the size of our school. It is very large, and sometimes Laura had trouble finding the right classroom.
- a* She kept in touch with her old friends, she made an effort to get to know her new classmates and she drew a plan of the school that she took with her everywhere. By the end of the term, she had made some friends and knew her way around the school. She felt much happier and more confident.
- c* Join groups at school and talk to your parents about how you are feeling. Remember that it takes time to adjust to a new school and that most students do settle in eventually.

3 Read the article again and answer the questions (1–2).

- Which of these things does Maria do at the end of her article?
 emphasize something to the reader
 encourage the reader
 promise the reader success
 warn the reader
 wish the reader good luck
- Does she use formal or informal language? Is her choice correct?

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4 Match two or more adjectives from the box with each topic (1–5). Use each adjective only once.

compulsory	confident	confused	cosy	demanding
determined	major	motivated	practical	relevant
significant	spacious	supportive	tense	
unfamiliar	upset			

- feelings: _____
- people: _____
- events: _____
- information: _____
- places: _____

EXAM STRATEGY

Start each new paragraph with a statement that explains the main idea. Continue with sentences that provide further information, such as examples or reasons.

5 **EXAM TASK** You are on an exchange trip to a school in the UK and have read the following advertisement in the school magazine. Write an article of at least 100 words in which you:

- ▶ describe your own experience of exam stress,
- ▶ explain why the experience was stressful,
- ▶ say how you coped with it and suggest another technique for coping.

Coping with exam stress

Of course exams play a big part in every student's life, and many of us get stressed by them. Do you have any experience of coping with exam stress? Do you have any techniques you could share? If so, send us your ideas in the form of a short article.

6 Check your work.

- Have you written about all three points in the task?
- Have you used appropriate formal language?
- Have you started each paragraph with a topic sentence?
- Have you written at least 100 words?

Magazine article/blog post: describing an important event, describing past events

Describing an important event

The (big) highlight for me was (learning how to ...)
 The most amazing part was when we ...
 It was especially exciting when we ...
 I remember (watching a game) and thinking 'Wow!'
 Ever since then, I've been obsessed with ...
 I'd never (skated) before then/until I (went to an ice rink) with my friend.
 Overnight, I became completely hooked on ...
 I'll always remember the first time I ...
 My main impression was of (enormous speed).
 My main memory of the (day) is of (crossing the finish line).
 This event made me ...

Describing an approximate time in the past

About (two years) ago, ...
 A little/short while later, ...
 After some time, ...
 Some time later, ...
 It was around that time that ...
 A few (years) ago, ...
 Afterwards, ...
 Shortly afterwards/after/before ...
 Before long, ...

Describing a specific time in the past

That (day/week/term), ...

Two months before (the exam), I began ...
 I had written an essay about that topic two months earlier/ previously/before.
 (Three weeks) later, ...
 Immediately after (the exam), I ...
 Immediately afterwards, ...
 I (got up) as soon as I (woke up).
 By the time I (got home), I (was very hungry).
 By the (end of term), I had ...
 By then/that time, I was ...
 At the same time, ...
 Before that/Until then, I had (not) ...

Commenting on a situation or event

(Not) surprisingly, (I felt ill).
 Stupidly, (I forgot to take my phone with me).
 Apparently, ...
 Admittedly, ...
 Amazingly, ...
 Curiously/Strangely, ...
 Fortunately, ...
 Hopefully, ...
 Naturally, ...

Describing the stage when something happened

Initially, ...
 Finally, ...

Give your description an interesting opening paragraph. Include information about where and when your story happened.

Tell the main story in the second and third paragraphs.

Use time expressions and sequencers to connect events.

Bring your narrative to a clear end in the final paragraph.

The first GAME

I first went to a football match when I was eleven years old, but I remember it as if it were yesterday. My dad used to go with his friends as often as he could, and one Saturday he asked if I wanted to join them. I'd never been all that interested in football, but I was curious, so I said yes. It was Oxford United against Tottenham Hotspur.

The atmosphere grew more and more intense as we walked towards the ground amongst crowds of people, and the noise inside was amazing. And when the game started it got even louder. I couldn't believe that adults could behave like this, screaming and pointing and groaning. At first, I spent more time watching the crowd than the football. How could they care so much?

It started to pour with rain at half-time, and the stands were uncovered – this was before Oxford moved to a new stadium. But it didn't matter. By then I was hooked, and I spent the second half shouting and jumping up and down with everyone else. I even enjoyed the cold hotdogs that we bought after the game.

The final score? Well, it wasn't really about the score for me, it was the experience that mattered. That game changed my life, it made me a dedicated follower of Oxford United, and it led to many years of hope and disappointment (mainly disappointment). It was 0-0.

Describe feelings as well as events – this will make your description more entertaining and involving.

Use different narrative tenses and structures – past simple, past continuous, past perfect, *used to*.

Try to use a good range of vocabulary.

Use questions to keep the reader interested and involved.

Use a mix of longer and shorter sentences – this will make your description more interesting to read.