

P35 [1/1] STORYTIME: Learn English with Stories (free LEP Premium Sample) #1 THE BEAR

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Hello listeners, how are you? Welcome back to the podcast.

The title of this episode is **P35 StoryTime: Learn English with Stories (LEP Premium Sample) #1 THE BEAR STORY**

There's a PDF for this, which is a full transcript. Check the episode description, click the link and you can open it and read along with me, or just read it later.



Also there's a video version with text on the screen so you can follow along with me while I read. I'll try not to go too quickly, so you can keep up.

This could be a long episode. It might be worth watching or listening to this in several sessions, or just see if you can stick with me for the whole thing!

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When episodes have P at the start, it means they are premium episodes, so this is a premium episode, but this time I am uploading it as a free episode.

The idea is that with this episode I am giving you a sample of what happens in episodes of LEP Premium - just to give you a flavour of LEP Premium, maybe to entice you to sign up, just little bit.

I want to take this opportunity to say that LEP Premium is now available on Acast+.

You probably heard me mention this change in episode 776. I told you to wait before signing up to LEP Premium.

Well, now, you can. All the premium episodes are there, they are ready, and you can now sign up and get started if you wasn't.

It's open now. Just click the link in the description where it says "sign up to LEP Premium here", or just go to www.teacherluke.co.uk/premium to get started.

And if you want more information about all of this, just go to www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo That's where you get all the information about the premium subscription, including the incredibly reasonable pricing, how to get the premium videos, premium PDFs with transcripts and worksheets, what usually happens in episodes of LEP Premium and more information. www.teacherluke.co.uk/premiuminfo

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Most of the premium episodes are vocabulary reviews focusing on language which has come up naturally in episodes of the free podcast. Usually, I pick out target language from an episode, for example a conversation with my dad, and then I focus on reminding you of specific phrases you heard but might not have fully noticed or understood, I use my particular set of teaching skills to help you understand and remember those bits of language while also expanding things and showing you all sorts of other related vocabulary like synonyms and collocations, and then I test your memory and use of that language and finally I give you a chance to practise pronouncing the language by repeating after me.

That's what you usually get in episodes of LEP Premium and I've done a lot of episodes like that so far. There are currently about 150 episodes, with transcripts and worksheets and everything.

But with this episode I'm giving you a free preview of a slightly different series which I am going to publish in the premium subscription over the next few months. So this is just a little taste of what's coming to LEP Premium.

Now, this isn't just an advert for the premium subscription. I'm also going to tell you a story, teach you some language from the story and also demonstrate a learning method which you can use to improve your English by yourself.

StoryTime

The series I'm talking about is called StoryTime. That's what I've decided to call it. If you're a premium subscriber, you'll have heard me mention this lots of times. I've been talking about doing it for ages. Here it is, finally.

StoryTime is a collection of short stories, with accompanying PDFs, which I will use to help you improve your English in various ways. I'll demonstrate it here in this episode.

This episode is going to include:

- Some details of my storytelling technique, which is a method of improving your English with stories.
- A story told by me - with a full transcript available (check the links in the description to download the PDFs - you don't need to give your email address or anything)
- Language exercises focusing on grammar, vocabulary and prepositions in the story
- Listen & Repeat pronunciation drills - to practise actually saying the lines from the story just like me - so you can work on your pronunciation and accent as well.

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And we're aiming to do all of that in one single episode here. I wonder if we'll manage it. It might be necessary to publish the pronunciation part in another episode, which is what I would normally do in LEP Premium in fact.

Future episodes of StoryTime in LEP Premium will contain a story, plus grammar & vocab exercises and a pronunciation section, just like this one.

If you want to sign up to LEP Premium to get the other episodes in the series when they arrive, plus all the premium content so far, click the link in the show notes or go to www.teacherluke.co.uk/premium

Let's talk about stories and learning English.

Stories are great for learning English

Stories are a very compelling resource for learning languages. Everyone knows this. It's just a question of finding the right stories with the right level of support from a teacher, reading them or listening to them, and probably applying some kind of study technique.

Stories are very immersive and have been effective ways of communicating ideas for thousands of years.

Apparently, stories work well because when we listen to them or read them we are able to put ourselves in the shoes of the protagonist of that story. It's almost like experiencing the events for ourselves.

This makes stories very vivid and personal, and that's exactly why they're so great for language learning. It seems that we really learn language and remember vocabulary and structures when we absorb them in a very vivid, personal and captivating way.

Hopefully the fact that the stories in this series are my own true stories should help that process, especially if you've been listening to me for a while and you've got to know me now.

Also, we use stories socially a lot to share ideas and communicate concepts and feelings, and humans have been doing this for many many years. Oral storytelling (the spoken word) is a tradition that goes back way beyond the history of the written word. It's kind of part of our DNA now, to learn and communicate through spoken stories.

Narratives are important. Us humans, we like narratives. They are meaningful to us. Narratives have always been the most effective vehicle for communicating ideas. Think of the way various concepts have been handed down from generation to generation through

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stories, how we are so touched and mesmerised by movies and books, and how the world's religions have narratives at their centre.

There are different types of narrative. Big ones (like the stories in the Bible or the myths and legends that we know) and smaller, more personal ones (like little anecdotes about our lives that we share with people when we meet them).

Everyone knows that sales people or presenters who use stories or some kind of narrative technique always manage to get more success. This is also true of presentations. The best TED Talks for example seem to tell an emotional story as well as informing you of their subject.

It's very important to be able to tell stories in English. You need to be able to explain things that have happened to you in your life. We all need anecdotes for social situations, like gatherings where you're trying to make friends with people or establish meaningful connections with them. That could be a party, or a work event, or a conference or something. We tell people stories about ourselves in order to make connections.

The most obvious example of a story we all have to tell is the narrative of your own life. People will always ask you about yourself and you need to be able to explain who you are, where you come from, why you chose to do the thing that you're doing right now, or you need to be able to explain the story of your professional career and how you did this and then this and then that and so on. Like those moments when you have to describe your CV in a job interview. That's storytelling too.

Also, being able to tell anecdotes is very important for social life - being entertaining, interesting, funny and charming.

In terms of language - this all relates to using the right verb tenses, using natural pronunciation with, emphasis, sentence stress & pausing and all the vocabulary that you need to tell vivid, engaging and descriptive narratives in the right style.

I've been thinking about all of this, and also I have noticed that my storytelling episodes are often the most popular (which is no surprise) so I thought I had to do more story based content on my podcast. It's obvious to me. It's what people need, it's what people like, and it's what I like doing too. I do enjoy telling stories - either adventure stories, stories in books, stories for my daughter at bed time, stories about my life, funny stories on stage in stand up, stories about history, stories about The Beatles. I love stories.

What I'm presenting to you here with this new series for LEP Premium, which I'm calling StoryTime, is a way to help you learn English with my stories - and also to give you the

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chance to practise telling stories in English in various contexts and to develop your own particular set of English skills in the process.

I do have a specific technique for doing this. It involves stories with transcripts.

The Importance of Transcripts

When you have a short text with a transcript, and the text is a personal story from the point of view of the storyteller, then you get the recipe for some great English learning resources.

The transcript on it's own isn't quite enough. You also need the audio. The reason for this is so you can hear the spoken word. This is how you develop your oral English - listening and speaking skills, and this is important because you can't just learn English on paper. You need to learn how to do English and that means speaking. The transcript is there to support this, mainly because it really helps in English to connect the spoken version to the written version. The two things are quite different. The way words are written isn't the same as the way they are spoken. So if you just work on the written word, you're missing a lot - how those words are spoken.

The advantage of having a transcript is that you can easily examine the language that you've heard by looking at the script, but also when you listen and repeat, you can check that what you're hearing and saying are the right thing, and in this way you can shadow my pronunciation, practise grammar actively and pick up new vocabulary and connect the written version of English to the spoken version of English.

With my storytime episodes you'll get a story from me, with a script plus loads of other practice exercises and comments from me, and pronunciation practice too. So I'll support you along the way.

Ok, it's time to talk about that specific technique for learning English with stories that I mentioned before. This is the technique you could use with my storytime episodes. It's a step by step approach.

It's not revolutionary. I'm not claiming to be coming up with brand new "secret" ideas here. But if you're looking for some specific techniques for learning English on your own, with my material. Here's how I think you should do it.

Luke's Storytelling Technique

Essentially it can be boiled down to this. There are more details in each step as I will explain in a few minutes, but first, to keep it simple - it goes like this.

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Input

- Listen once
- Read the transcript and check any unknown language

Controlled Practice

- Listen & repeat - chunk the sentences (pronunciation)
- Language study (grammar & vocabulary)

Output

- Try to tell my story in your own words
- Think of a similar experience and tell your own story

You could consider that to be a cycle, because after the output section you can listen to the my story again one more time, starting the process again. It's always good to repeat.

The Steps in Detail

INPUT

1. Listen to me telling the story, try to understand it all. Enjoy it (hopefully). This should be the fun part.
2. Go through the script and investigate any words you don't know.
When I say investigate, I mean this: When you come across a word or phrase that you don't know, try to guess what it means using the grammatical context and meaning context around the word or phrase, and then use a good online dictionary to help. I recommend the Oxford Dictionary for Learners of English, the Collins English dictionary or the Cambridge Dictionary for Learners of English. Other dictionaries are available. Sometimes it's a good idea to cross check the different definitions.

I might clarify these expressions after I tell you each story, but in any case, it's always good to learn ways to research new words yourself, so you don't need to rely on someone else to do it. I could do a whole episode on how to use online dictionaries to help with your vocabulary. They are full of useful information beyond just the definitions of words. That's another episode for another time.

CONTROLLED PRACTICE

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3. Use the memory tests on the PDFs for my premium episodes to check and practise your grammar and vocabulary. There should be three tests per story - A grammar test (usually for verb forms), a vocabulary test (words and phrases) and a prepositions test (this tests a range of language systems which are often overlooked but which are vitally important - such as fixed phrases, phrasal verbs or collocations which need prepositions - these are those slippery aspects of English which often make the difference between intermediate and advanced levels, and beyond).
4. Once you've checked unknown words, and tested your grammar and vocabulary, listen again and try to repeat the lines after me. I will give you pronunciation drills to make this easier.

Repeat each line without looking at the script - just try to repeat what you hear. This will make you focus on the way things are pronounced. Then you can check the script to see if you were saying the same words as me.

In my pronunciation drills I normally give you the chance to repeat each line a couple of times, but if you like you can use the "skip back" button that most podcast apps will have. Skip back if you want to repeat more than twice.

Try to copy my intonation, my rhythm, how I pronounce vowel sounds, consonant sounds and combinations of consonants, and watch out for how I link words together.

Maybe the most important thing is to notice the stress or emphasis in each line. Certain words, or certain syllables in each line will carry more stress than others. This marks the rhythm of the sentences. English is a stress-timed language, which means that some syllables get more emphasis than others, and the syllables without the stress might get squashed, so things like little words or parts of words don't get "fully pronounced" - they have weak forms. That's a bit complex to understand maybe, but at least try to notice the sentence stress or rhythm of the sentence and copy it.

Try to say the lines as one word in some cases, without pauses between each word.

When I do pronunciation practice - I will break sentences into chunks or pieces. These pieces are pronounced with no spaces between each word. The words are all linked together. The pauses come between each chunk.

I'll give you examples of this when we get to the pronunciation drills later in this episode.

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Listen to me say each line, repeat them like me, skip back if you want, repeat it again, and again and again.

Check the script to make sure you're saying the right words. But don't always look at the script when repeating. Instead, listen and repeat without looking at the script, then reveal the script to check you are saying the words that are written.

Compare any differences between how the line is written and how you expect the it to be said, how I actually say it, and how you say it.

Try to copy me, not copy the script.

Say it like I say it, not how it looks.

English writing and speaking are different. If you want to focus on your speaking skills, pay attention to how words are spoken, but make sure you know how they are spelled too.

Obviously, in English, there are many accents. People from different places say the same words differently. I'm from England and so I have an English accent.

Here's an example of what I mean by chunking sentences.

If we do one chunk per line,
we can break up the story into the right sections,
pause in the right places,
add emphasis to the right words
and generally make sure we are telling the story in the correct way,
which I think should be very helpful
and beneficial.

That's actually one sentence, broken up into chunks. Each chunk can be pronounced with all the words linked. You pause between each line.

For example

If we do **one** chunk per **line**,
we can break **up** the **story** into the right **sections**

It's also possible to change the text to highlight which words or syllables are stressed, any weak forms and maybe where and how the words are linked in various ways. You can see how I've done that to two example lines above.

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We could also include phonemic transcriptions of each line, to show what they *really* look like, phonetically.

If we do **one** chunk per **line**

/ɪfwi:du:wʌnɪfʌŋkprɜ:lain/

we can break **up** the **story** into the right **sections**

/wɜ:kənbreɪkʌpðəsto:ri:jɪntəðərɪtsekʃəns/

,

I'm not going to do that with the rest of that sentence now though, because I want to keep moving.

But often in premium episodes I do focus on some of those specific pronunciation features while doing pronunciation practice.

I'll talk a little bit more about the phonemic script in a moment.

5. You could print the script and then go through it again with a pen, marking where there should be pauses, marking which words are emphasised, marking how they're emphasised (up, down etc) marking how bits are linked together, and noting how some words or phrases sound compared to how they are written.

It would help a lot if you used the phonemic script as well.

On the PDF version you can see the phonemic chart for British RP English (basically the accent I have). This is the one from Adrian Underhill's website. By the way, Underhill wrote a great book about pronunciation called Sound Foundations, but maybe that's for the English teachers. Pronunciation and phonetics is a great and useful subject - and definitely would be a good episode for another time.

The point is - learning the phonemic script can help you to decode English words and if you learn all the symbols and sounds, it can help you with your pronunciation. That's another episode for another time.

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e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	əʊ
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	aʊ
p	b	t	d	ts	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j

Let me just say this again - the full script of this episode including the story (which I'm going to start in a minute!) and all the exercises are available as a pdf download in two versions - one for your phone (large letters) and one to be read on paper or on your computer (normal letter size). Check the links in the description to download them. Again, this is what you always get in episodes of LEP Premium.

OUTPUT

6. Try to tell the story in your own words, without the script. You've become pretty familiar with the story now, so try to say it out loud, without the script. It doesn't matter if you change some details. You could record yourself doing this and review it later, or you could do this with a friend. Your friend is the teacher and has the script, and you try to tell the story while your friend gives you a few clues to help you remember what comes next, or gives you little corrections if necessary. Try to make your telling of the story interesting. Don't just recite it like a robot. Put some feeling into it.

Basically - tell my story in your own words - either the same as mine, or change it a little bit.

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7. Write the story and then compare your written version to the script. Again it doesn't have to be exactly the same, but my version can be a sort of guide or benchmark for you when you write your version.
8. Consider changing the point of view when you re-tell my story (either orally or in writing). You could tell the story in the first person (I did this, I did that) or the 2nd person (you did this, you did that) or the 3rd person (Luke did this, Luke did that). When you're using past tenses, this isn't so tricky. But in other tenses it forces you to remember things like adding an S or ES on the end of verbs and so on. Just little things which can make a big difference. It's all forcing you to practise doing things correctly.
9. Try to tell your own story - in speaking and/or in writing. Do you have a similar experience you can describe? Maybe you could re-write my story completely. The main thing is - be creative here and come up with your own story and tell it - either on paper or out loud, even if it is just into your phone. Here you can just go a bit crazy if you want and let your imagination run wild. You could correct all the grammar and stuff later.
10. Listen to my story one more time, and enjoy the fact that you now understand every single detail.

Essentially the process is
Input - Practice - Output

- **Input:** Listen to the episode, notice the language
- **Practice:** Do my tests and my listen-and-repeat drills (and check the script)
- **Output:** Try to tell your own story - a re-telling of mine, and/or a completely new story based on a similar experience you've had.

You can do that with every single story I publish and you'll see that over time it'll make a huge difference to your English.

A lot of this is about practise, time and repetition. Just doing it once will be good. But you'll get the best results by doing it again and again. When a StoryTime episode arrives in LEP Premium, you can go through the process - and just follow my instructions in the episode and on the PDF.

Sometimes I tell stories in the free podcast too, and there might be transcripts or automatic subtitles on YouTube that can help you.

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But in the premium episodes I do my best to give you all the support you need in a convenient way.

If you use the memory tests in the PDF and do all the listen & repeat drills, it will make all the difference.

So many skills are involved in this kind of work. There's listening, there's grammar, there's vocabulary, there's pronunciation, there's memory.

I'm not saying it's the be-all and end-all of learning. Obviously, other things are important, like speaking practice with a person - engaging in conversation. This is also vital, but using my materials and methods can definitely make a big difference.

You are absolutely bound to learn vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation like this. All you need to do, is do it with every episode. All you need to do is make sure you don't stop. Just keep it up, every time. Make it a habit. Listen to the audio, follow my instructions and do the exercises I present to you. It's all about long-term regular practice. Make it a habit to go through my process with every storytime episode that I publish in this series, and also go into the back catalogue of premium episodes, listen to them and use the PDF worksheets. They're not all story episodes but they are still full of language teaching, focusing on English which has come up in natural conversations on my podcast.

So, you can do all of that...

but if this sounds like too much work and you don't like the idea of me giving you homework, then don't worry about it. If you really prefer you can just sit back and listen to the stories for entertainment without doing any other work. It's up to you. That will also help. That is another technique. Just chill, relax, press play and enjoy.

But if you are really serious about this and you want to get the maximum benefit from my episodes, you'll follow my technique. There it is. I have made it clear. I've spelled it out for you. It's up to you now.

My Stories

I've been searching my memory, my creativity, moments from my life in order to produce stories for this project. Most of these stories will come from my own life, but also I might include other stories I've found elsewhere too. Sometimes I will use anecdotes that I have told on the podcast before, but presented this time with scripts and worksheets.

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You can expect a range of different stories about different things, mostly from my life experience but also I'll be picking stories from elsewhere - things I've found online, stories about other things and so on. But in any case, you can expect StoryTime episodes to arrive in LEP Premium over the next few months. Summer will be a busy period for me but I'll be doing my best to provide episodes for you on a regular basis.

Now I could stop here, but I thought I would share one of my stories now and give you a demonstration of what storytime episodes will involve.

The story I'm going to share here is called "A Close Encounter with a Bear"

Before you listen

An **encounter** - this is the word we use to describe when you "meet" an animal without expecting to. This is one of the meanings.

For people we'd probably say "**to bump into someone**"

*"I **bumped into** Paul McCartney the other day. Yeah, I was in a shop and he happened to be standing in front of me in the queue so we had a bit of a chat and I'm going round to his place tomorrow for dinner, which is nice."*

We use the word **encounter** when you meet an animal, because you don't really meet animals. "Hello, how do you do? Oh, you're a bear. How nice. Pleasure to meet you. Please don't rip my arm off. Can I have my hand back now? Thank you"

We don't **meet** animals. We **encounter** them, and it's often unexpected.

So this is the story of when I had an unexpected encounter with a bear. I told the story once, quite briefly in an old episode from the archive (to be specific - it was LEP#292 "[292. California Road Trip \(Part 5\)](#)").

But here is the story, presented in more detail, in LEP Premium.

Can you follow specifically what happened, how I felt and why I felt that way?

We will do some language practice exercises after I've told you the story.

Remember, all of this is transcribed on the PDF for this episode. Just check the show notes - it's there. No need to give your email address or anything.

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There's also a PDF with just the story transcript and none of these other notes.

My Close Encounter with a Bear

Let me tell you about a time when I had a close encounter with a bear. This happened on my honeymoon in 2015. My wife and I decided to do a tour of California over about two and a half weeks. I insisted that our tour include a visit to Yosemite National Park, which is a huge wilderness area surrounding a canyon and is home to some of the most famous rock formations, mountains and clifftops in the world. I don't know if you've heard of it, or been there. It's a fantastic place. Yosemite National Park, in California. Trees and mountains and stuff.

My wife wasn't entirely sure about this as it involved camping in the forest, and she's not very outdoorsy. In the end I convinced her. I made sure we had plenty of mosquito repellant, including those smelly anti-mosquito bracelets that you can get. You wear them around your wrist and they're supposed to keep the mosquitoes away. I don't really know if they work, but I thought that if they made my wife feel a bit more comfortable, they'd be worth bringing.

The park is in a valley in the middle of a large area of mountain and forest. It's a great place for hiking, sightseeing and climbing but the area is also home to plenty of wildlife, including bears, which stay up in the mountains during the day, and descend into the valley at night in search of food. They are usually attracted by the smells of people cooking at the campsites and the rubbish that people leave out, and this can be a problem.



So, when you enter the camping area there are loads of signs everywhere warning you of the danger of bears.

The signs all say these things very clearly:

- The bears have a super strong sense of smell (Their noses are something like 8 times more sensitive than a dog's)
- They are extremely curious

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- They will investigate anything that smells like food, and that includes your rubbish and also your cosmetics and bathroom products
- If you get trapped in a corner with a bear, if you block its exit or it has young cubs nearby, these bears can be extremely dangerous

So you have to put any food or any products that smell (including shampoo, soap etc) into special heavy-duty metal boxes or “bear boxes”. These can be locked and unlocked with a large handle that the bears can’t operate, because they’re not quite as clever as humans, in most cases. I suppose it depends on the humans.

Anyway, after our first day in the canyon we retired for the evening, made sure everything was in the bear box and lay down on our camping mattress in our tent to sleep. We were in what is called a semi-permanent tent. It had three walls made of brick, and then just two canvas curtains at the front which opened out into the forest. Directly in front of these curtains were some seats, a campfire pit and the bear box. The curtains were held closed by a couple of little strings. This was all that stood between us in our camping bed, and the forest outside.

Lying on our camping mattress we could hear the sounds of nature around us, and the occasional sound of some people moving around and talking nearby.

Eventually we fell asleep, but in the middle of the night I woke up to a strange sound. I listened for a while and realised that something was scratching and poking the bear box just outside our tent.

Something was definitely investigating our box and trying to open it. I could hear scratching, and if I listened closer I could hear some breathing and the sound of teeth and jaws biting and scraping against the box. Bear in mind that the box was only about two metres away from us on the other side of a canvas curtain in the entrance to our tent.

I suddenly became terrified when I realised that it was a bear, right there in front of us.

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I'd seen all the documentaries about bears, bear attacks, polar bear attacks, people being eaten by bears and more. I knew what happened in The Revenant, with Leonardo DiCaprio.

I'd seen all the warning signs around the camp site.

Now there was an actual bear just outside our actual tent.

I started thinking about whether the bear would decide to investigate our tent. Was there anything smelly that would attract it?

I realised my wife and I were still wearing anti-mosquito bracelets, which were quite smelly and I expected to see the muzzle of the bear poking in between the front flaps of the tent which were held on by only a simple bit of string. Surely it would come and investigate us. I thought that at any moment we would come face to face with a bear. What would I do? Scream? Punch it? Could I really punch a bear in the face?

At this point I decided I should wake up my wife, because she was still asleep, right? I thought that she might want to be awake for this, to see her newly-wed husband either punch a bear in the face, or get mauled to death by one - maybe both. I just thought that we should experience that together, you know, because we had recently made marriage vows about that kind of thing - in sickness and in health, til death do us part etc. I know it didn't say anything about bears in the marriage vows, but I decided to wake her up anyway.

So I gently and quietly woke her up.

"Darling, darling"

"What??"

"Shhhh! There's a bear! There's a bear just outside our tent!! There's a bear! Out there!"

She just started laughing at me.

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She could not control herself.

This was hilarious for her.

Meanwhile, I was panicking about the huge beast that was just a couple of steps away.

“Shhh! Shut up shut up!”

I don’t think she understood the danger we were in.

She’s from the city. She was born and raised in Paris. I don’t think she knows animals.

So I think she didn’t fully understood the threat, the danger, the peril.

I said “bear” and I think in her mind it was the teddy bears’ picnic or something.

So there I was between danger and ridicule, in the middle of a forest.

So, I know what you’re thinking. Luke, did you get killed by a bear?

And, yes, I did. I got killed by a bear and I’m dead now. The end.

No, not really, of course. What happened is that we lay there for a while, listening, and eventually the sounds of scratching and breathing went away. The bear must have walked away and moved on to another bear box or something.

I know that’s perhaps not the dramatic ending you were hoping for, but that is what happened.

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The next day I read up on bears in Yosemite National Park, and I learned more. I found out that they are black bears, and of all the bear species in the United States the black bears are in fact the least dangerous.

That's not to say they're not dangerous at all, because as I said before, they can be. But they're not like polar bears or grizzly bears. They won't attack people unless they absolutely have to. They will usually avoid us completely and can be scared off quite easily by just making a lot of noise. Attacks by black bears are very rare. So, actually they're fine. They're quite nice in fact.

So the next night I was much more comfortable and slept well and in the end it was all ok and I was absolutely fine.

My wife got eaten by a bear*, but I was fine.

The end.

**Of course she didn't. This is just a joke.*

Before I talk about language practice exercises, here are some additional comments about this story

I often use this bear story when playing the lying game in class with my students. The lying game is a speaking exercise in which people tell stories and other members of the class have to ask questions and guess if the story is true or not.

To demonstrate the game I tell my students this story and they have to guess if it is true or not.

Most people usually think that this is not a true story, which means I get lots of points in the game, because it is completely true. I have told it before on the podcast in fact - in episode 292 "California Road Trip part 5"

<https://teacherluke.co.uk/2015/08/31/292-california-road-trip-part-5/>

Here are comments or questions that my students ask me when I tell them this story.

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Weren't there any armed guards in the park protecting visitors from bear attacks?

- In fact, it's not necessary really. The bears aren't that dangerous. In fact, when bears and people come into contact with each other, it's usually the bears who end up getting hurt. They can be hit by cars, they can climb inside cars to find food and sometimes the bears have to be put down if they are in a potentially dangerous situation. So the park rangers prefer to keep the bears away from the park, and the best way to do that is to make sure there is no food lying around that will attract them.

Why didn't you call for help?

- I don't know! I guess it didn't get to that point. If the bear had tried to come into the tent, I would have screamed and made noise for sure!

I don't think they would let people camp in this place if there were bears.

- Like I said, the bears generally don't hurt people and the safety measures are for the protection of the bears as much as for the protection of people.

So you didn't actually see the bear. How could you be so sure it was one?

- True. We didn't actually see it. But what else could it have been? Scratching, the sounds of biting on the box. The breathing (sort of a snorting sound)

A Quick Summary of the Story

Basically, this is what happened in just a few sentences.

My wife and I went on our honeymoon to the USA. One of the places we visited was Yosemite National Park, where we did some camping.

In the park there are some bears and occasionally they will come into the camping areas to look for food.

At the campsite we had to put all our food and products in sturdy metal boxes, so the bears wouldn't be able to steal it.

While my wife and I were sleeping in our tent, a bear tried to open our bear box.

I could hear the bear scratching and biting the box just a couple of metres from where we were sleeping.

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I was terrified.

I woke up my wife, but she just thought it was funny that I was so scared.

Thankfully the bear eventually went away, and everything was ok.

That's it!

Language Practice Exercises - Working with the story

Here is how you can use my storytelling technique to work on your English with this story.

Just follow my instructions.

You've already listened to the story, so you've done the input part. Now we have to move to the controlled practice part.

There are two ways of doing this - **on paper** and **pronunciation**.

Exercises on paper (grammar and vocabulary)

For the **on paper** part, you can pause the podcast, go to the PDF or check the page for this episode. Then do the exercises. The exercises are just down there 📌.

You will see gapped versions of the original story.

Grammar - Verb Forms

The first version has verbs missing. I've taken out most of the verbs from the transcript. You have to put them back in, in the correct form. We can focus on verb tenses - narrative verb forms, but also other types of verb form - such as gerunds and infinitives - those moments when the verb is in the -ing form or in the base form.

I want to highlight instances where either an infinitive (to go) is used or a gerund (going) is used to help attach verb phrases into sentences or when making participle clauses and so on. So, as

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well as verb forms for past tenses and conditionals etc, look out for gerunds and infinitives too.

Basically, all the times when the verbs are used in various forms.

Vocabulary

The second version has vocabulary removed. Any meaningful items of vocabulary which I think are worth learning have been gapped. You have to put them back in. This should force you to notice the different words and expressions which I used.

In both cases, the verbs and vocabulary items are given to you in a box, in alphabetical order.

It's up to you to choose the right ones and then put them in the right form.

Prepositions

The third version of the story focuses on prepositions.

I've removed the prepositions from the story and you have to put them back in. This will test things like collocations, phrasal verbs and more.

That's the paper part. You can check all your answers by returning to the original story to check.

Pronunciation Exercises

Then the pronunciation part basically involves repeating the story after me, line by line.

I'll break the story into chunks, with pauses and sentence stress highlighted and you have to repeat it all after me.

Free practice - Retell the story

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Then after the controlled pronunciation work there's the free part where you have to re-tell the story yourself. Try to tell the story again, without reading it from the script. Don't worry if your version isn't exactly the same as mine. Just try to tell the story in your own words. If you use the same language as I did - great! If you find another way to do it, that's ok too!

Tell your own story

And then you can try to think of a similar experience you've had, and describe that either by speaking or by writing.

Language Practice Exercises

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Grammar - Verb Forms

Put the verbs in the box into the correct gaps in the text. Use the correct verb forms in each case. Sometimes you might need to add an auxiliary verb (have, be, do). Check the original text when you have finished for the answers.

My Close Encounter with a Bear (Part 1)

Bring	Cook	Have	Include x3	Surround
Camp	Decide	Happen	Insist	Tell
Climb	Descend	Hear	Make	Warn
Convince	Feel	Hike	Sightsee	

Let me _____ you about a time when I _____ a close encounter with a bear. This _____ on my honeymoon in 2015. My wife and I _____ to do a tour of California over about two and a half weeks. I _____ that our tour _____ a visit to Yosemite National Park, which is a huge wilderness area _____ a canyon and is home to some of the most famous rock formations, mountains and clifftops in the world. I don't know if you _____ of it, or been there. It's a fantastic place.

My wife wasn't entirely sure about this as it involved _____ in the forest, and she's not very outdoorsy. In the end I _____ her. I _____ sure we had plenty of mosquito repellent, _____ those smelly anti-mosquito bracelets that you can get. You wear them around your wrist and they're supposed to keep the mosquitoes away. I don't really know if they work, but I thought that if they made my wife _____ a bit more comfortable, they'd be worth _____.

The park is in a valley in the middle of a large area of mountain and forest. It's a great place for _____, _____ and _____ but the area is also home to plenty of wildlife, _____ bears, which stay up in the mountains during the day, and _____ into the valley at night in search of food. They are usually attracted by the smells of people _____ at the campsites and the rubbish that people leave out, and this can be a problem.

So, when you enter the camping area there are loads of signs everywhere _____ you of the danger of bears.

Part 2

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Depend	Lie x2	Sleep	Talk
Hold	Lock	Smell	Unlock
Include	Move	Stand	

The signs all say these things very clearly:

- The bears have a super strong sense of smell (Their noses are something like 8 times more sensitive than a dog's)
- They are extremely curious
- They will investigate anything that _____ like food, and that _____ your rubbish and also your cosmetics and bathroom products
- If you get trapped in a corner with a bear, if you block its exit or it has young cubs neaby, these bears can be extremely dangerous

So you have to put any food or any products that smell (including shampoo, soap etc) into special heavy-duty metal boxes or "bear boxes". These can be _____ and _____ with a large handle that the bears can't operate, because they're not quite as clever as humans, in most cases. I suppose it _____ on the humans.

Anyway, after our first day in the canyon we retired for the evening, made sure everything was in the bear box and _____ down on our camping mattress in our tent _____.

We were in what is called a semi-permanent tent. It had three walls made of brick, and then just two canvas curtains at the front which opened out into the forest. Directly in front of these curtains were some seats, a campfire pit and the bear box. The curtains were _____ closed by a couple of little strings. This was all that _____ between us in our camping bed, and the forest outside.

_____ on our camping mattress we could hear the sounds of nature around us, and the occasional sound of some people _____ around and _____ nearby.

That's enough! No need to do the entire story. Check your answers by looking at the original script (above).

Let's move on to vocabulary.

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Vocabulary

Can you remember the missing vocabulary from the story? I've given you the first letter in each case.

My Close Encounter with a Bear

Let me tell you about a time when I had a close e_____ with a bear. This happened on my h_____ in 2015. My wife and I decided to do a tour of California over about two and a half weeks. I insisted that our tour include a visit to Yosemite National Park, which is a huge w_____ area surrounding a canyon and is home to some of the most famous rock f_____, mountains and clifftops in the world. I don't know if you've heard of it, or been there. It's a fantastic place.

My wife wasn't e_____ sure about this as it involved camping in the forest, and she's not very o_____. In the end I convinced her. I made sure we had plenty of mosquito r_____, including those smelly anti-mosquito bracelets that you can get. You wear them around your w_____ and they're supposed to keep the mosquitoes away. I don't really know if they work, but I thought that if they made my wife feel a bit more comfortable, they'd be w_____ bringing.

The park is in a valley in the middle of a large area of mountain and forest. It's a great place for hiking, sightseeing and climbing but the area is also home to plenty of wildlife, including bears, which stay up in the mountains during the day, and descend into the valley at night in search of food. They are usually attracted by the smells of people cooking at the campsites and the rubbish that people leave out, and this can be a problem.

So, when you enter the camping area there are loads of signs everywhere warning you of the danger of bears.

The signs all say these things very clearly:

- The bears have a super strong s_____ of smell (Their noses are something like 8 times more sensitive than a dog's)
- They are e_____ curious
- They will investigate anything that smells like food, and that includes your rubbish and also your cosmetics and bathroom products

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- If you get t_____ in a corner with a bear, if you block its exit or it has young cubs nearby, these bears can be extremely dangerous

So you have to put any food or any products that smell (including shampoo, soap etc) into special h_____ -d_____ metal boxes or “bear boxes”. These can be locked and unlocked with a large handle that the bears can’t operate, because they’re not quite as clever as humans, in most cases. I suppose it depends on the humans.

Anyway, after our first day in the canyon we retired for the evening, made sure everything was in the bear box and lay down on our camping m_____ in our tent to sleep. We were in what is called a semi-permanent tent. It had three walls made of brick, and then just two canvas curtains at the front which opened out into the forest. Directly in front of these curtains were some seats, a campfire pit and the bear box. The curtains were held closed by a couple of little s_____. This was all that stood between us in our camping bed, and the forest outside.

Lying on our camping mattress we could hear the sounds of nature around us, and the o_____ sound of some people moving around and talking nearby.

Eventually we fell asleep, but in the middle of the night I woke up to a strange sound. I listened for a while and realised that something was scratching and p_____ the bear box just outside our tent.

Something was definitely investigating our box and trying to open it. I could hear scratching, and if I listened closer I could hear some breathing and the sound of teeth and jaws biting and s_____ against the box. Bear in mind that the box was only about two metres away from us on the other side of a canvas curtain in the entrance to our tent.

I suddenly became terrified when I realised that it was a bear, right there in front of us.

I’d seen all the documentaries about bears, bear attacks, polar bear attacks, people being eaten by bears and more. I knew what happened in The Revenant, with Leonardo DiCaprio.

I’d seen all the warning signs around the camp site.

Now there was an actual bear just outside our actual tent.

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I started thinking about whether the bear would decide to investigate our tent. Was there anything smelly that would attract it?

I realised my wife and I were still wearing anti-mosquito bracelets, which were quite smelly and I expected to see the m_____ of the bear poking in between the front flaps of the tent which were held on by only a simple bit of string. Surely it would come and investigate us. I thought that at any moment we would come face to face with a bear. What would I do? Scream? Punch it? Could I really punch a bear in the face?

At this point I decided I should wake up my wife, because she was still asleep, right? I thought that she might want to be awake for this, to see her n____-w____ husband either punch a bear in the face, or get m_____ to death by one - maybe both. I just thought that we should experience that together, you know, because we had recently made marriage v_____ about that kind of thing - in sickness and in health, til death do us part etc. I know it didn't say anything about bears in the marriage vows, but I decided to wake her up anyway.

Again, that is enough! You can check your answers by looking at the original version.

Prepositions

To help you notice preposition collocations, prepositions of place and movement and also phrasal verbs or dependent prepositions, do this exercise.

Here are all the prepositions in English. But: Not all of these prepositions are in the story! You'll just need to choose the right ones.

About	Above	Across	After	Ago
At	Below	By	Down	During
For	From	In	Into	Off
On	Over	Past	Since	Through
To	Under	Until	Up	With

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My Close Encounter with a Bear

Let me tell you _____ a time when I had a close encounter _____ a bear. This happened _____ my honeymoon _____ 2015. My wife and I decided to do a tour _____ California over about two and a half weeks. I insisted that our tour include a visit _____ Yosemite National Park, which is a huge wilderness area surrounding a canyon and is home _____ some _____ the most famous rock formations, mountains and clifftops _____ the world. I don't know if you've heard _____ it, or been there. It's a fantastic place.

My wife wasn't entirely sure _____ this as it involved camping _____ the forest, and she's not very outdoorsy. _____ the end I convinced her. I made sure we had plenty _____ mosquito repellent, including those smelly anti-mosquito bracelets that you can get. You wear them _____ your wrist and they're supposed to keep the mosquitoes away. I don't really know if they work, but I thought that if they made my wife feel a bit more comfortable, they'd be worth bringing.

The park is _____ a valley _____ the middle _____ a large area _____ mountain and forest. It's a great place _____ hiking, sightseeing and climbing but the area is also home _____ plenty of wildlife, including bears, which stay up _____ the mountains during the day, and descend _____ the valley _____ night _____ search _____ food. They are usually attracted _____ the smells _____ people cooking _____ the campsites and the rubbish that people leave out, and this can be a problem.

So, when you enter the camping area there are loads _____ signs everywhere warning you _____ the danger _____ bears.

The signs all say these things very clearly:

- The bears have a super strong sense _____ smell (Their noses are something like 8 times more sensitive than a dog's)
- They are extremely curious
- They will investigate anything that smells like food, and that includes your rubbish and also your cosmetics and bathroom products
- If you get trapped _____ a corner _____ a bear, if you block its exit or it has young cubs nearby, these bears can be extremely dangerous

So you have to put any food or any products that smell (including shampoo, soap etc) _____ special heavy-duty metal boxes or "bear boxes". These can be locked and unlocked _____ a large handle that the bears can't operate, because they're not quite as clever as humans, _____ most cases. I suppose it depends _____ the humans.

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That is enough!

To check your answers, just look at the script for the original story.

Let me just go through some of those prepositions quickly, just to highlight the collocations.

Tell you *about* something

To **have an encounter** *with* something/someone

On your honeymoon

In 2015

etc

If you want to continue the exercise with the rest of the script, why not make your own exercise:

- Copy paste the story into a text editor (microsoft word, for example)
- Go through the text and remove all prepositions (replace them with a gap like this ____)
- Then, when you have finished, try to put the prepositions back in

This will help! I promise.

Another idea is to remove every 9th word. Just count the words and every 9th word, remove it.

Then look at the text again and try to put the words back in, from memory. This will force you to notice certain bits of language, including grammar and vocabulary collocations. Trust me - this works!

Pronunciation

For this section I have broken the story into chunks. These are groups of words which are separated by pauses. Just repeat each chunk after me. That's it!

I will do the first 3 paragraphs of the story here. For pronunciation practice with the entire story, you'll have to listen to part 2 of this, which will be a pronunciation exercise, and that will only be for the premium subscribers.

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Anyway, let's look at a chunked version of the first 3 paragraphs of this story. Premium subscribers should know what I mean when I say a "chunked" version. There's a whole episode of LEP Premium about chunking, with a video as well.

Chunked Version of The Story (first 3 paragraphs)

Just try to repeat each line (chunk) after me.

Don't just listen to me saying these lines. You have to repeat these lines after me, out loud. Don't be embarrassed, it's fine. I'm telling you to do it, so it's not weird. You don't need to feel awkward or anything. Just repeat after me.

Even if you can't do it out loud - if you're in public or something or there's a bear sleeping next to you and you don't want to disturb it. At least mouth the lines silently. Don't just listen to me saying these sentences. This will work if you actually try to repeat these lines. Trust me, I know what I am doing.

Notice how each chunk is pronounced without gaps or pauses between the words.

In each chunk there are stressed words - highlighted in **bold** on the PDF.

I could go into all the analysis of the phonetics here with connected speech and so on, but let's just keep this simple and just try to copy me. Try to do it exactly like me - and don't be distracted by the way the words look on the page. Focus on the way these lines sound, not how they look. Copy the sounds.

I will give you some silence after each line. That's when you should be repeating after me.

OK, let's begin.

My Close Encounter with a Bear

Let me **tell** you
about a **time**
when I had a close **encounter**
with a **bear**.

This **happened** on my **honeymoon**
in **2015**.

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My **wife** and I
decided to do a **tour** of California
over about **two** and a half **weeks**.

I **insisted**

that our **tour** include a **visit** to Yosemite **National Park**,
which is a **huge wilderness area**
surrounding a **canyon**
and is **home** to some of the most **famous rock** formations,
mountains and **clifftops**
in the **world**.

I don't know if you've **heard** of it,
or **been** there.
It's a fantastic **place**.

My **wife** wasn't entirely **sure** about this
as it involved **camping** in the **forest**,
and she's not very **outdoorsy**.

In the **end**
I **convinced** her.

I made **sure** we had **plenty** of mosquito repellent,
including those **smelly anti-mosquito bracelets** that you can get.
You **wear** them around your **wrist**
and they're supposed to **keep** the mosquitoes **away**.
I **don't** really **know** if they **work**,
but I **thought** that if they made my wife feel a bit more **comfortable**,
they'd be worth **bringing**.

The **park** is in a **valley** in the **middle** of a **large** area of **mountain** and **forest**.
It's a **great** place for **hiking**,
sightseeing
and **climbing**
but the area is **also** home to plenty of **wildlife**,
including **bears**,
which stay up in the **mountains** during the **day**,
and **descend** into the **valley** at **night**
in search of **food**.

They are **usually** attracted by the **smells** of people **cooking** at the **campsites**

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and the **rubbish** that people leave out,
and this can be a **problem**.

That's enough I think! If you want pronunciation drills for the whole story, you can listen to part 2 of this episode (P35 Part 2), which will be available soon, but you need to be a premium subscriber for that.

But now, that is the end of this episode of LEP Premium available free on LEP.

If you want to sign up to LEP Premium and get access to the full episode archive plus all the forthcoming stories, go ahead and click the link in the

That's it for the podcast today though. Thank you for listening!

Have a lovely day, morning, afternoon, evening or night and I will speak to you again soon.