

# Back to School in 2026—Revisit Some of Our Best Vocabulary Lessons and Short Stories to Kick-Start Your Year!

## Level A2-B1-B2

**Topic:** Get back into English after the summer with useful lessons and amazing short stories. Start the new learning year with something interesting and enjoy the journey!

*"School is a building which has four walls with tomorrow inside."*

~Lon Watters, American Artist



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Chilomoni LEA (Local Education Authority) Primary School in Blantyre, Malawi

Last month, I had the privilege of revisiting my childhood primary school in Blantyre, Malawi. I felt teary as I showed my husband the classroom blocks and the trees surrounding them.

Finally, he could picture the place that has been the setting for many of my stories about my early years. This was the place where children would scramble out of their classrooms and rush home after hearing the siren of an ambulance:

*"Opopa magazi! Opopa magazi!"* (The bloodsuckers! The bloodsuckers!)

Of course, the ambulance men and women were simply doing their jobs, but the sound of that shrill siren would scatter so many of us out of our classrooms.

The school looked just as I remembered it: the windows, the colours, the schoolyard and the blue-and-white building that has always held a special place in my memory.

If memory serves me right, if you walk behind that building, you will find the other classroom blocks and the sports ground.

Chilomoni LEA Primary School. LEA stands for *Local Education Authority*.

This is the place that ignited my love of study and learning. Here, I was allowed to start school at the age of three, instead of the standard six or seven.

Apparently, I screamed my lungs out when I failed the entrance test. The test was to put your arm over your head and reach the opposite ear. Of course, I could not do this at the age of three, so the headmaster had to say no.

Since I couldn't take no for an answer, I threw myself onto the ground and started screaming. The poor man eventually had to let me stay at school, and that is how I began my primary education.

Forty-two years after that day, at the age of forty-five, I can speak six languages and am currently learning three others, all thanks, in part, to that foundation.

I am passionate about languages and I would like to share that passion with you on this website.

Below, you will find some of our best back-to-school lessons, short stories and blog posts. Perhaps they will help to inject a little language-learning bug into you, too.

Why don't we start?

## Vocabulary Lessons

### ENGLISH VOCABULARY: Types of Schools

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

PRIMARY

SECONDARY

RURAL

URBAN

CHARTER

VOCATIONAL

DAY

NIGHT

BOARDING

DISTANCE LEARNING

BILINGUAL

STATE

GRAMMAR

FAITH

HOME

TECHNICAL



## DESCRIBING SCHOOLS

If you are going back to school or simply feeling a little nostalgic about your school days, this lesson is a good place to start. It takes you through the vocabulary you need to talk about schools, classrooms, subjects, teachers, students and all the little details that make a school what it is.

You will also find plenty of examples and opportunities to use the new words yourself, rather than simply memorising lists of vocabulary.

The lesson is aimed at A2–B1 learners and is particularly useful if you would like to move beyond *“This is my school”* and actually describe what your school was like.

You may even find yourself remembering your own classroom, your favourite teacher or perhaps the teacher you would rather forget! Why not have a look and see how much of your own school life you can describe in English?

You can find the full lesson here: [Vocabulary for Describing schools in English](#)

## DESCRIBING DAILY ROUTINES



What do you do every day? When do you get up, have breakfast, go to school or work, and finally collapse into bed?

This lesson shows you how to talk about your everyday habits and routines using the **Simple Present tense**. You will learn useful vocabulary and expressions for describing a typical day, from waking up in the morning to going to bed at night, with plenty of examples along the way.

You will follow two different daily routines: that of a student and that of an employee. This makes the grammar much more meaningful because you see the **Simple Present** being used in real-life situations rather than in isolated sentences.

By the end of the lesson, you will have the vocabulary and grammatical structures you need to describe your own routine—and perhaps discover that your mornings are rather more interesting than you thought!

You can find the lesson here: [Talk about Habits and Daily Routines](#)

# WHAT DO YOU DO?



“What do you do?” is one of those deceptively simple questions that comes up all the time when we meet someone new.

At a party, at work, while travelling or simply making conversation with someone we have just met. But how do you answer naturally in English, and how do you keep the conversation going?

In this lesson, you will learn useful vocabulary and expressions for talking about your job, profession and career, with plenty of examples to help you put the language into practice. Y

You will also learn how to ask questions and respond to this very common piece of small talk without getting stuck after the first sentence. After all, a conversation is much more interesting when it goes both ways!

You can find the full lesson here: [What Do You Do?](#)



## Short Stories



### THE OLD WITCH AND THE WISH

Charles meets the same old woman on his way to school every day. She is always friendly to him, but his friends are convinced that she is a witch. They actually warn him to stay away from her.

Charles begins to wonder if they might be right. After all, why take chances with a woman who might fly at night?

This short story for A1–A2 learners is a gentle tale about fear, rumours, kindness and the danger of judging people too quickly.

Along the way, you will learn useful vocabulary and expressions for talking about wishes, wants and what we would like to happen.

Read the story, listen to it, test your understanding with the quiz and see what happens when Charles finally discovers the truth about the old woman.

You can read the full short story here: [The Old Witch and the Wish](#)

## I WILL NOT LEARN UNDER A MANGO TREE

### ENGLISH GRAMMAR: THE SIMPLE PAST

#### AFFIRMATIVE FORM (+)

|                                       |   |                |
|---------------------------------------|---|----------------|
| I                                     | } | <b>started</b> |
| You                                   |   |                |
| He/She/It                             |   |                |
| We                                    |   |                |
| You                                   |   |                |
| They                                  |   |                |
| E.g. We <b>started</b> very well.     |   |                |
| <i>They <b>started</b> yesterday.</i> |   |                |

#### NEGATIVE FORM (-)

| FULL FORM                | SHORT FORM              |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| I <b>did not</b> learn.  | I <b>didn't</b> learn.  |
| You <b>did not</b> play. | You <b>didn't</b> play. |
| He <b>did not</b> run.   | He <b>didn't</b> run.   |
| We <b>did not</b> sing.  | We <b>didn't</b> sing.  |
| You <b>did not</b> go.   | You <b>didn't</b> go.   |
| They <b>did not</b> sit. | They <b>didn't</b> sit. |

#### INTERROGATIVE FORM (?)

##### YES/NO QUESTIONS

|            |      |               |
|------------|------|---------------|
|            | I    |               |
|            | you  |               |
|            | he   |               |
|            | she  |               |
| <b>Did</b> | it   | <b>start?</b> |
|            | we   |               |
|            | you  |               |
|            | they |               |

##### WH-QUESTIONS

What **did** he **start**?  
When **did** he **start**?  
Where **did** he **start**?  
Who **started**?  
How **did** he **start**?  
Why **did** he **start**?  
With whom **did** he **start**?

#### REGULAR VERBS

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Arrive <b>Arrived</b> | Slice <b>Sliced</b> |
| Start <b>Started</b>  | Want <b>Wanted</b>  |
| Play <b>Played</b>    | Stay <b>Stayed</b>  |
| Ban <b>Banned</b>     | Plan <b>Planned</b> |
| Stop <b>Stopped</b>   | Skip <b>Skipped</b> |
| Marry <b>Married</b>  | Try <b>Tried</b>    |

#### IRREGULAR VERBS

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Make <b>Made</b>   | Sit <b>Sat</b>      |
| Have <b>Had</b>    | Stand <b>Stood</b>  |
| Be <b>Was/Were</b> | Buy <b>Bought</b>   |
| Do <b>Did</b>      | Teach <b>Taught</b> |
| Get <b>Got</b>     | Speak <b>Spoke</b>  |
| Run <b>Ran</b>     | Write <b>Wrote</b>  |



<https://learnenglishwithafrica.com>

It is Jack Phiri's first and last day at school. He wants to learn, but there is one small problem: he absolutely refuses to learn under a mango tree.

And, as it turns out, his friends feel exactly the same way. So what has happened? Why are they so determined not to go to school?

This short story for A2–B1 learners takes you into a school setting in Africa while helping you use the **Simple Past** in a natural and memorable way.

You will discover what happened to Jack and his friends and learn useful vocabulary along the way. Sometimes, the best way to learn grammar is to find out what happened next!

You can read the rest of the short story here: [I Will Not Learn Under a Mango Tree](#)

## THINGS

### SCHOOL OBJECTS VOCABULARY



**PEN**



**PENCIL**



**RUBBER**



**RULER**



**PENCIL CASE**



**GLUE**



**SHARPENER**



**CRAYONS**



**SCISSORS**



**NOTEBOOK**



**GEOMETRY SET**



**TEXTBOOK**



**CALCULATOR**



**SCHOOL BAG**



**COLOURING  
PENCILS**

Tawonga is twelve years old and dreams of becoming a journalist. One day, four visitors from England arrive in her village carrying some objects for her family. But what exactly have they brought, and what will Tawonga make of these unfamiliar things?

This short story for A2–B1–B2 learners is a fun way to learn and use English vocabulary for everyday objects in context.

Follow Tawonga as she discovers what the visitors have brought, learn useful words along the way and see how much you can understand from the story.

Sometimes, an ordinary object can tell us quite a lot!

Read the full short story here: [Things](#)

## Conclusion



Standing in front of my childhood primary school

Going back to Malawi reminded me of just how far I have come on my language-learning journey.

I actually used to be passionate about learning French in Malawi. I just didn't have as many resources as we have now in our digital age.

My passion for French helped me connect with my now-French husband. People back home were actually puzzled as to why I wanted to learn this language. Sometimes, we never know how fate works.

I started learning Italian at university and picked it up again many years later when my daughters needed to learn the language at school.

Learning Polish was a necessity since I now live in Poland with my family. It is one of the hardest languages I have ever had to learn. And yet, it is a pleasure to discover new rules and new vocabulary every single day.



Oh, and I forgot that English is the official language in our country!

That leaves us with German, Spanish and Kiswahili. I am learning these languages too, and I am happy to do so on a regular basis. Languages are my passion, after all!

I hope these suggestions will help kick-start your language-learning year. Be consistent and don't give up on your dreams. Enjoy the journey, and the rewards will come in their own time. Good luck with your studies!