Telling stories

What do you think are the key features of a good story or anecdote?

anecdote /ˈænɪkdəʊt/
noun a story that you tell people about something interesting or funny that has happened to you

Learning objectives: Unit 8
People skills Telling an anecdote; Asking questions of encouragement; Fluency: Telling interesting stories
Listening An anecdote about a journey

1 🔊 **1.30** Complete the anecdote below with suitable words. Then listen and compare your answers.

A Look at that car!
B Yes, very nice. It's a Porsche 911.
A Did I ever tell you about the time I had a (a) _____ in a Porsche?
B No, I don't think so.
A It was when I (b) _____ a student. I was (c) _____ in Europe and a man in a Porsche stopped. He took me all the way across Austria. We (d) _____ about 220 kilometres an hour all the way.
B What about the (e) _____?
A Well, they (f) _____ us about four times, but this chap just showed them some identity card and they waved us on.
B Was he someone (g) _____, then?
A I don't know, I didn't ask. I (h) _____ he was some sort of high-ranking official. Anyway, it was the fastest I've ever been in a car.

2 🔊 **1.31** Look at these sentences from the anecdote in 1.
It was when I was a student.
I was hitchhiking in Europe.

Make similar sentences using the prompts below. There are several alternatives. Then listen and compare your answers.

a while / live / Italy
b before / start / work / here
c after / leave / university
d when / work / ICL
e before / get / married
f just after / children / born
g look / job
h do / Masters / the States
i study / at Cambridge
j work / small company / north
k travel / Asia
l stay / Continental Hotel / Prague

3 🔘 **1.32** You can encourage other people to tell you about their experiences by asking *Have you ever …?* or *Did you ever …?* Match the questions (a–h) with the answers (1–8). Then listen and check your answers.

a Did you ever hitchhike when you were a student?
b Have you ever had a car accident?
c Have you ever been to Rome?
d Have you ever lost any money on the stock exchange?
e Did you ever fail an exam at school?
f Have you ever been camping?
g Have you ever played a video game in 3D?
h Have you ever done anything illegal?

1 No, I'm glad to say. I nearly had one this morning!
2 Yes, lots of times. Actually, we bought a camper van last year.
3 No, but I'd love to see the Coliseum one day.
4 Yes, but it was a long time ago, and I hated waiting in the rain.
5 I didn't know you could. I've seen films with it though.
6 Not unless you count speeding and parking fines.
7 Not at school but I did at university.
8 No and I've never made any either.

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h

4 Work with a partner and each tell two anecdotes based on the questions below. Help your partner by asking more questions. Use the useful language to help you.

Speaker A
Have you ever been stopped by the police when you were driving? Where were you going? Why did they stop you? Were they right or wrong? What was the outcome? Did it change your attitude either to driving or to the police, or did it confirm what you already thought?

Speaker B
Who was your least favourite teacher at school or lecturer at university? Why didn't you like them? Can you remember an incident that was typical of that person? Who was involved? What happened? What was the outcome? Did it change your point of view in any way or did it confirm what you already thought?

Speaker A
What was the best holiday you ever had? Where did you go? Who did you go with? Did you do anything unusual? Have you been back to the same place again?

Speaker B
What was the worst holiday you ever had? Where did you go? Who did you go with? Did you do anything unusual? Have you been back to the same place again?

Useful language:
Telling stories
Have you ever …?
Did you ever …?
I'll never forget the time I …
It was when I was at …
I … at the time.
Then what happened?
How did you feel about that?