

Day 1: The Morning Rush

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Daniel's alarm goes off at 6:45 a.m., but he hits **snooze**—once, then again. When he finally opens his eyes, sunlight is **streaming** through the curtains, and it's already 7:20.

“Oh no,” he **groans**. “Not again.”

He **staggers** to the bathroom, still half asleep. He brushes his teeth, splashes water on his face, and runs a comb through his hair so he doesn't look quite so **disheveled**.

There's no clean laundry left, so he pulls on the first shirt he can find. Unfortunately, it's **wrinkled**, but there's no time to **iron** it.

In the kitchen, he checks his phone while the coffee is **brewing**. His coworker Emma has texted: *Don't forget the meeting at 9!* “No time for coffee,” he **mutters** as he **grabs** his bag and rushes out the door.

The hallway smells like bacon from someone else's breakfast, which makes his stomach **rumble**. Outside the city is waking up - cars are **honking** and people are walking dogs in the **cool** morning air. It's a little **chilly**, but of course he has forgotten his jacket.

Daniel's **heart is pounding** as he **sprints** toward the bus stop. As he turns the corner, he sees the bus pulling away.

“Wait!” he shouts, waving his arms like a **maniac**. The driver doesn't see him, and the bus disappears down the street.



Daniel lets out a long **sigh** and sits down on the bench. “Perfect start to the week,” he **quips**.

Just then, a woman rounds the corner, **clutching** a **travel mug**. “I missed it, didn’t I?” she asks.

“**Join the club**,” Daniel says, still slightly out of breath. “Guess I needed my morning exercise.”

She **chuckles**. “Guess so. Are you on your way to work, too?”

“Yes,” says Daniel, “Assuming I still have a job when I get there. I’m **running late** and I’ve got a meeting at 9.”

The woman **glances** at her watch. “The next bus is in seven minutes; I think you can **make it**.”

“**Fingers crossed**,” Daniel replies. “How about you, what do you do?”

“Besides being **chronically** late?” she jokes. “I’m a graphic designer. But thankfully I don’t have any **pressing** deadlines today.”

They both smile. When the next bus arrives, they sit together near the window, still **chatting**. The morning stress **evaporates** as Daniel realizes that sometimes, being late isn’t the worst thing that can happen.

✓ Check Your Understanding

1. Why was Daniel in a hurry that morning?
 - A) He got up late.
 - B) His alarm didn't go off.
 - C) He took too long to make breakfast.

2. What happened when Daniel reached the bus stop?
 - A) The bus never came.
 - B) He missed the bus by a few seconds.
 - C) He got on the wrong bus.

3. Where is the woman going?
 - A) To a meeting.
 - B) To work.
 - C) To a café.

4. What was Daniel's attitude by the end of the story?
 - A) He was determined to wake up earlier.
 - B) He was still annoyed about missing the bus.
 - C) He realized his bad morning had led to something positive.

Answers at the end of this document.



Key Vocabulary

Let's learn the key vocabulary words from this story, "The Morning Rush."

Daniel's alarm goes off at 6:45am, but he hits **snooze**. The verb snooze means to sleep lightly, but when we talk about "hitting snooze" on an alarm, it means you press a button that delays the alarm for a few more minutes so you can sleep a little longer.

When he finally opens his eyes, sunlight is **streaming** through the curtains. Streaming means flowing steadily; we often describe light or water or tears as streaming.

"Oh no," he **groans** - to groan is to make a sound of displeasure, you're not happy. Then he staggers to the bathroom - **stagger** is to walk unsteadily, like when you're tired, weak, drunk, or injured.

He washes his face and combs his hair so he doesn't look so **disheveled** - that means messy in appearance. Unfortunately his shirt is **wrinkled**, it is not smooth, it has little folds or lines in it. We can describe fabric or skin as being wrinkled. But there's no time to **iron** it. To iron is to make clothes smooth using a heated device, which is also called an iron.

He checks his phone while the coffee is **brewing**. The verb brew means to prepare coffee or tea by mixing it with hot water and waiting. But there's no time, he **mutters** - to mutter means to speak quietly, often in a complaining way. So he grabs his bag - to **grab** is to take something with your hand, often quickly - and rushes out the door.

The smell of bacon in the hallway makes Daniel's stomach **rumble**. Rumbling is a deep continuous sound; we often use it to talk about the sound your stomach makes when you're hungry, or about the sound of thunder.

Outside, cars are **honking** - that's the noise it makes when you press the car's horn. And it's **chilly**, meaning a little cold, cold enough to need a sweater or jacket.

Daniel's **heart is pounding** as he **sprints** towards the bus stop. To sprint is to run very fast for a short distance, and saying his heart is pounding means it's beating very fast. This can happen from running, or from intense emotions like fear or excitement.

He tries to get the bus driver's attention by waving his arms like a **maniac** - a maniac is a crazy or extremely energetic person. But the bus leaves, and he lets out a long **sigh**. To sigh means to let out a long breath, showing tiredness, frustration, or sometimes relief. In this case, it's frustration.

"Perfect start to the week," he **quips** - quip means to say something funny or clever quickly; in this case, Daniel is speaking sarcastically because he's having the opposite of a perfect morning.

A woman appears, **clutching** a travel mug. To clutch means to hold something tightly, and a travel mug is a cup with a lid that's made for carrying hot drinks. When she realizes she missed the bus, Daniel replies, "**Join the club**" - we say this little phrase to show that we are in the same situation as the other person. The woman **chuckles**, meaning she laughs lightly or softly.

Daniel says he's **running late** - running late means something or someone is behind schedule, it is later than the planned or expected time.

The woman **glances** at her watch - glances means she looks quickly - and says she thinks Daniel can **make it**. Make it, in this context, means succeed in arriving on time. Daniel replies "**fingers crossed**," which is what we say when we hope something will happen or go well.

The woman describes herself as **chronically** late - chronically means it happens repeatedly or continues over a long time. So she's almost always late. But fortunately she doesn't have any **pressing** deadlines. Something that is pressing is urgent, it needs immediate attention.

As Daniel and the woman chat, the morning stress **evaporates** - evaporate is the verb we use for water turning into vapor, and in this case it means it disappears, Daniel's stress disappears.

Grammar Focus

We see several examples of the **present simple** and the **present continuous** in this story. Here's the basic difference:

Present Simple	Present Continuous
Used for single actions, habits, routines, facts, and things that are always true.	Used for actions currently in progress, happening right now, or temporary situations.
Daniel takes the bus to work every morning. (habit)	His heart is pounding . (temporary situation)
"Wait!" he shouts . (single action)	People are walking their dogs in the cool morning air. (in progress, happening now)

Present Simple in the Story:

We use the present simple to describe Daniel's typical morning routine — things that happen regularly.

- He **brushes** his teeth and **splashes** water on his face.
- He **pulls** on the first shirt he can find.
- He **grabs** his bag and **rushes** out the door.

These are daily habits — they happen almost every day in the same way.

We also see the present simple used for single actions:

- He **checks** his phone.
- The woman **glances** at her watch.
- They **smile**.

Subject	Verb – Positive	Verb – Negative
I / you / we / they	drink coffee rush out the door try to catch the bus	don't drink coffee don't rush out the door don't try to catch the bus

he/ she / it	drinks coffee rushes out the door tries to catch the bus	doesn't drink coffee doesn't rush out the door doesn't try to catch the bus
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Present Continuous in the Story:

We use the present continuous for actions that are in progress at the moment of speaking, or temporary actions happening “around now.”

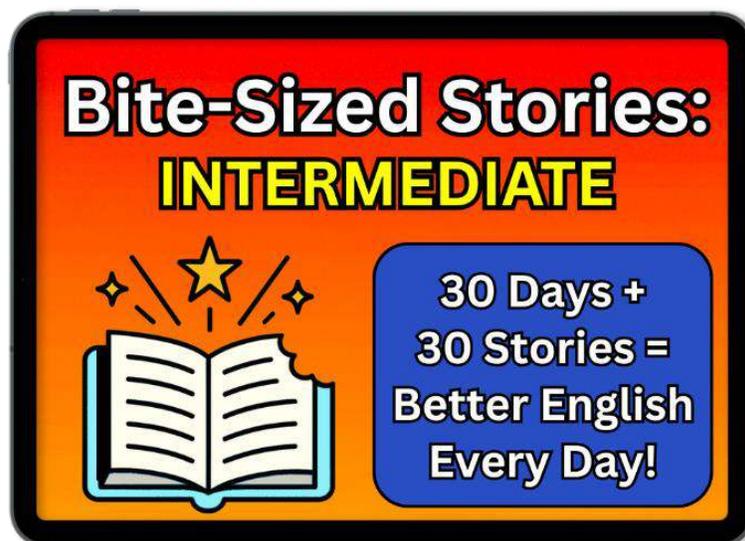
- Sunlight **is streaming** through the curtains. (right now)
- The coffee **is brewing**. (it's in progress)
- The city **is waking** up — cars **are honking** and people **are walking** dogs. (continuous actions happening now)
- **I'm running** late. (situation in progress at the moment of speaking)

Subject	Verb	
I	am running late am walking my dog am brewing coffee	am not running late am not walking the dog am not brewing coffee Short form: I'm not running
you / we / they	are running late are walking my dog are brewing coffee	are not running late are not walking the dog are not brewing coffee Short forms: You're not running / You aren't running
he/ she / it	is running late is walking my dog is brewing coffee	is not running late is not walking the dog is not brewing coffee Short form: He's not running / He isn't running

Your Turn!

Write about a time things were going wrong, but they turned out OK in the end (or a time you managed to find something positive within a bad situation).

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Answers to "Test your understanding": 1) A, 2) B, 3) B, 4) C.