

A by ... = not later than:

- ☐ I sent the documents today, so they should arrive **by Monday**.
(= on or before Monday, not later than Monday)
- ☐ We'd better hurry. We have to be home **by 5 o'clock**.
(= at or before 5 o'clock, not later than 5 o'clock)
- ☐ Where's Sarah? She should be here **by now**.
(= now or before now – so she should already be here)



This milk has to be used
by 14 August.

B We use **until** (or **till**) to say *how long* a situation continues:

- ☐ A: Shall we go now?
B: No, let's **wait until** it stops raining. or ... **till** it stops raining.
- ☐ I was very tired this morning. { I **stayed in bed until** half past ten.
I **didn't get up until** half past ten.

Compare **until** and **by**:

Something *continues* **until** a time in the future:

- ☐ Joe **will be away until** Monday.
(so he'll be back *on* Monday)
- ☐ I'll **be working until** 11.30.
(so I'll stop working *at* 11.30)

Something *happens* **by** a time in the future:

- ☐ Joe **will be back by** Monday.
(= not later than Monday)
- ☐ I'll **have finished my work by** 11.30.
(= I'll finish it not later than 11.30)

C You can say '**by the time** something happens':

- ☐ It's too late to go to the bank now. **By the time we get there**, it will be closed.
(= it will close between now and the time we get there)
- ☐ You'll need plenty of time at the airport. **By the time you check in and go through security**, it will be time for your flight.
(= check-in and security will take a long time)
- ☐ Hurry up! **By the time we get to the cinema**, the film will already have started.

You can say '**by the time** something happened' (for the past):

- ☐ Karen's car broke down on the way to the party last night. **By the time she arrived**, most of the other guests had left.
(= it took her a long time to get there and most of the guests left during this time)
- ☐ I had a lot of work to do yesterday evening. I was very tired **by the time I finished**.
(= it took me a long time to do the work, and I became more and more tired)
- ☐ We went to the cinema last night. It took us a long time to find somewhere to park the car. **By the time we got to the cinema**, the film had already started.

You can say **by then** or **by that time**:

- ☐ Karen finally got to the party at midnight, but **by then** most of the other guests had left.
or ... but **by that time**, most of the other guests had left.

Exercises

120.1 Complete the sentences with *by*.

- We have to be home not later than 5 o'clock.
We have to be home *by 5 o'clock*.
- I have to be at the airport not later than 8.30.
I have to be at the airport
- Let me know not later than Saturday whether you can come to the party.
..... whether you can come to the party.
- Please make sure that you're here not later than 2 o'clock.
Please make sure that
- If we leave now, we should arrive not later than lunchtime.
If we leave now,

120.2 Put in *by* or *until*.

- Steve has gone away. He'll be away *until* Monday.
- Sorry, but I must go. I have to be home 5 o'clock.
- According to the forecast, the bad weather will continue the weekend.
- I don't know whether to apply for the job or not. I have to decide Friday.
- I think I'll wait Thursday before making a decision.
- I'm still waiting for Tom to call me. He should have called me now.
- I need to pay this bill. It has to be paid tomorrow.
- Don't pay the bill today. Wait tomorrow.
- We haven't finished painting the house yet. We hope to finish Tuesday.
- 'Will you still be in the office at 6.30?' 'No, I'll have gone home then.'
- I'm moving into my new flat next week. I'm staying with a friend then.
- I've got a lot of work to do. the time I finish, it will be time to go to bed.
- We have plenty of time. The film doesn't start 8.30.
- It is hoped that the new bridge will be completed the end of the year.

120.3 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use *by* or *until*.

- David is away at the moment. He'll be away *until Monday*.
- David is away at the moment. He'll be back *by Monday*.
- I'm just going out. I won't be long. Wait here
- I'm just going out. It's 4.30 now. I won't be long. I'll be back
- If you want to apply for the job, your application must be received
- My passport is valid
- I missed the last bus and had to walk home. I didn't get home

120.4 Read the situations and complete the sentences using *By the time ...*.

- I was invited to a party, but I got there much later than I intended.
By the time I got to the party, most of the other guests had left.
- I intended to catch a train, but it took me longer than expected to get to the station.
....., my train had already left.
- I wanted to go shopping after work. But I finished work much later than expected.
....., it was too late to go shopping.
- I saw two men who looked as if they were trying to steal a car. I called the police,
but it was some time before they arrived.
....., the two men had disappeared.
- We climbed a mountain and it took us a long time to get to the top. There wasn't much
time to enjoy the view.
....., we had to come down again.