



**Learn English Through  
Stories**  
E Series

E25

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# 1. The Princess's New Clothes

After their mothers went back, Grandma took all the children on a shopping spree. They went to the biggest clothes store in the town. Grandma had filled her purse with notes and told all the seven children, 'Each of you can buy one dress. It is our gift to you. Remember, I have 500 rupee for each of you to buy one dress.'

At the store she chose a nice comfortable chair. The children were allowed to decide which clothes they wanted and in which colour. They could go into the trial room and try them out before buying. After an hour, everybody had whatever they wanted, except Krishna. She had tried on many, many dresses but found fault with all of them. She told Grandma, 'This store does not have anything nice for me. Shall we go to another one?'

'What is wrong with this one? It is a well-known store,' Grandma remarked. But Krishna pouted and complained that she already had the colours and cuts available here, so everyone trooped off to the next shop. There, too, after a lot of thought, finally, Krishna chose her dress. Grandma had been watching all this with her typical soft smile. On the way back, as they piled into the taxi, she whispered to Krishna, 'It's good you chose a dress finally. But beware, or else you may turn out to be like that princess...'

'Which princess, Grandma?' the children asked.

'The one in the story.' Grandma was now looking out of the window.

'Tell us, oh tell us!'

So Grandma told them the story of the princess who never liked any of her clothes.

The king and queen of Ullas were very sad. No one was attacking them, the subjects were happy, the farmers had grown a bumper crop — then why were they so sad? They were sad because they longed for a child and did not have one.

One day, they learnt of a place in the forests in the kingdom, where if you prayed hard and well, you were granted your wish. They went there and for

many days prayed to the goddess of the forest. Finally their prayers were heard and the goddess appeared before them and asked what they wished for.

The king and queen bowed low and said, 'We wish to have a child.'

'So be it, you will soon have a little girl,' said the goddess, shimmering in the greenery. 'But remember, though she will be a loving child, she will have one flaw. She will love new clothes too much and it will make life difficult for you. Do you still want such a child?'

The king and queen wanted a baby so much they would have agreed to anything. So the goddess granted them their wish and vanished back among the trees.

Soon, as had been said, the queen gave birth to a lovely baby girl. Oh, what a beauty the little thing was, with her jet-black hair and thick eyelashes and long toes and fingers. They named her Beena. The kingdom rejoiced in their king's happiness and for a while there was complete joy everywhere.

Beena grew up a child loved by everyone. She became prettier by the day, and with her charming manners and ready laughter, she filled everyone's hearts with joy. But, as the goddess had said, she did have one flaw — she loved new clothes! She loved clothes so much she had to have a new outfit every day. She would refuse to wear the same clothes twice! Tailors from all over the kingdom and even from other kingdoms created beautiful, extraordinary clothes for her. Silk, cotton, wool, you name it, and Beena had a dress or sari of that material. Blues, greens, reds, pinks, every colour in nature was present in her wardrobe.

For a while the king and queen were happy to let her have new clothes every day. But soon they realized they were spending all their money and time in finding new tailors and clothes for their daughter! This had to stop.

They coaxed and cajoled and pleaded and scolded, but Beena remained unmoved. Her parents understood this was the flaw the goddess had warned them about, and finally decided to send Beena to the goddess to find a solution.

Beena entered the dark, green forest and waited for the goddess to appear. She came in a flash of green light, which lit up everything around her. Folding her hands, Beena told the goddess why she had come.

'I know your problem, my child. I will send you a new outfit every day. It will be unique, its colours and design will delight you. But you should remember one

thing: you cannot wear anything else, or exchange these clothes with anyone else. If you ever do that, your life will be miserable.'

Happily Beena agreed to this. After all, why would she be unhappy if she got a new dress every day?

From then on, Beena woke up each morning to find an extraordinary new sari or dress lying by her bed, ready to be worn. It was a dream come true for her!

She enjoyed herself no end, choosing matching earrings and bangles and shoes, and everyone kept telling her how pretty she looked.

Yet after some months the excitement died down. No one remarked when Beena sashayed in wearing another fantastic dress. 'Oh, it's the goddess's gift,' they all said. 'It's not something you or I can ever have,' all her friends said and shrugged and went their way.

Beena grew sad. Then one festival day, while walking near the river, she noticed a girl wearing a simple cotton sari. There was something about the way the girl walked and how attractive she looked which made everyone turn and stare. Beena noticed how the people were admiring the girl. She became jealous because no one noticed her beautiful clothes any longer, yet they had such praise for this simply dressed girl. She forgot all about the goddess's warning and went up to the girl and said, 'Will you take my dress and give me your sari in return? It is so lovely that people can't take their eyes off it.'



The girl was astonished. The famous Princess Beena was offering to take her sari, and was giving her a marvellous outfit in exchange! She could not believe her luck and happily gave her sari to Beena. She then wore Beena's dress and went away. No sooner had Beena worn the girl's sari than there was a flash and a bang. Her surroundings changed, and she found herself transported deep inside the forest, in front of the goddess.

'Beena,' the goddess called. 'I had told you that you cannot give away or exchange the clothes I gave you. But you have done just that! I am afraid there is a punishment for not listening to me. I will have to take you away from the world of humans forever.'

Beena looked down in sadness. She thought of her parents' tear-stained faces, the grief of the people in her kingdom who had loved her dearly. Then she spoke aloud, 'I will go away, but do grant me one last wish. Turn me into something that will remind everyone about their beloved princess, something they may even find useful.'

The goddess smiled and turned Beena into a plant. Do you know what plant Beena became? An onion! Have you noticed how the onion has so many layers? Those are all the dresses that Beena once wore. And have you noticed your mother's eyes water while she cuts onions? That is because unknown to ourselves, like all the people in Beena's kingdom, we still shed tears the beautiful, kind-hearted princess!

After listening to this story, Krishna wailed, 'Grandma, I don't want to be like Beena. I don't want to get turned into an onion! I promise not to fuss over my clothes from now on!'

## 2. The Cow of Plenty

There was a wonderful cow called Surabhi, who belonged to the sage Vasishtha. The cow gave her fortunate owner anything that he wanted: food and drink, clothes and even luxuries. Whenever her owner said the word *Give*, the cow was there to give him the thing he desired. It was not surprising that jealousy and greed were roused in the hearts of those who saw or heard of this wonderful creature.

It so happens that a powerful king, Vishwamitra, was on a hunting expedition which brought him, with many of his followers, to the hermitage of Vasishtha. The holy man greeted the king with great courtesy, then called upon the cow to produce a sumptuous feast for his guests. Immediately food and drink issued from the cow in an endless stream.

The king was delighted. But he felt envious too. And soon he was asking himself why a hermit in the forest should possess such a splendid creature. It would be more reasonable, he thought, if the cow were in his own hands to provide him with his many needs.

“I’ll give you ten thousand cows in exchange for this one,” he told the sage.

When Vasishtha refused to listen to the proposal, the king offered him his entire kingdom.

The sage refused this generous offer, saying that the cow not only supplied him with his own necessities, but also served a similar purpose for the gods and the spirits of the dead.

“Don’t forget that I am a king,” said Vishwamitra, “and when kings can’t have what they want, they take it by force.”

“It is not for me to resist,” said the sage. “I am only a hermit and a scholar. My life is devoted to the study of the sacred books. I cannot set myself against the might of your armed men. Kings do what they like, and take what they want, and never give it a moment’s thought.”

The king grew impatient, put a rope round the cow’s neck, and began to lead her away.

Surabhi was very unwilling to go. She turned her soft, pathetic eyes towards the sage and refused to move. The king struck her several times with a stick.

At first the sage said nothing. Then he spoke to the cow: “My dear and loving Surabhi, I understand your feelings, and I do not wish to lose you. But what can I do? The king is all-powerful. He is taking you away by force and I cannot

prevent him.”

When the cow heard these words she broke away from her captor and came running to the sage.

“Do you wish me to go?” she cried. “Have you lost all affection for me? Do you not care whether the king ill-treats me or not? Have you given me up completely?”

“What can I say?” said the sage. “A warrior’s strength lies in the force at his command. A hermit’s strength lies in the spirit of forgiveness he shows. I cannot stop him from taking you, but I certainly do not abandon you or wish you to go.”

“I won’t be taken by force,” said the cow. “If you say you want me with you, that is enough!”

As she spoke, her whole appearance underwent an amazing change. Her eyes flashed fire. Her head and neck grew to an enormous size, and she rushed at the king and his followers. Even more wonderful, great showers of burning coals poured from her tail, and the coals were followed by troops of soldiers. They came not only from her tail, but from her udder and her sides, and from the froth of her mouth. These warriors belonged to many countries and races of men – Greeks, Huns, Scythians, Parthians, Chinese – and they all wore the garments and carried the weapons peculiar to their country.

As they poured forth, they attacked the king and his men with great fury. But they inflicted no injury on them. They were content to give them a good fright. Although they chased Vishwamitra and his men for a distance of seventy-five miles, they did not kill any of them.

By the time the king had recovered his breath, he was already a changed man. He had boasted that kings could do as they liked. But now he realised that kings were really feeble compared with men of wisdom and piety. So he gave up his kingdom and went to live in a forest. He decided that he would persuade the gods to make him one of their priests. And finally, after many years of hardship, prayer and meditation, he achieved his goal and became a true sage.



## 3. Grammar Page

### The Present Progressive Tense

The present progressive tense is used to talk about **things that are continuing to happen**.

Make the present progressive tense by using **am**, **is** or **are** with a verb that ends in **ing**.

I am learning how to swim.

I am eating my lunch.

I am watching television.

She is reading a book.

Dad is baking a cake.

My sister is listening to music.

Uncle David is cleaning his car.

The dog is barking in the garden.

We are singing our favorite song.

My brother and I are playing a computer game.

The teachers are showing us a film.

They are bringing a television set into the classroom.

#### Notes

The **ing** form of a verb is called the **present participle**. You use the **present participle** with **am**, **is** or **are** to make the present progressive tense.

am + watching  
(present participle)

is + listening  
(present participle)

are + playing  
(present participle)

The present progressive tense is also used to talk about **things that are planned for the future**.

I am going to the library tomorrow.

My sister is giving me her bike when she gets her new one.

We can't go to the movies tomorrow because my mom is working.

We are having a barbecue on Sunday.

All my friends are coming to my party next week.

We're taking my cousin to the zoo later today.