

A day in the life of a policeman

Paul Williams is a policeman and he is very happy in his job. He thinks it's useful and interesting. He has been a policeman for ten years and now he's a sergeant, but he often thinks of his first two years in the force and laughs at some of the things that happened to him.

For the first two years of his career a policeman is "on probation"; in other words, his superior officers watch his progress closely to see whether he's going to be a suitable police officer. After his first nine months in the force, Paul was thinking of giving up. He just couldn't get used to the hours he had to work: early turn from six till two, late turn from two till ten, or, worst of all, night shift from ten till six. But the work was sometimes exciting. The most exciting day of Paul's two years of probation was a hot day in the middle of May. At one forty-five in the afternoon Paul was sitting round a table with his colleagues, waiting for his orders.

Sergeant Hawkins gave Paul his orders last because the men were dealt with in alphabetical order. "Hawkeye", as the men called him, was a grandfather and treated all the young policemen as boys.

Sgt. Hawkins: I think I'll give you a change, Williams.

Paul: Thank you, sergeant.

Sgt. Hawkins: As you probably know, there have been a lot of petty thefts from houses in Faversham Street over the last few months.

Paul: That's the street where I was born.

Sgt. Hawkins: Is it? Good. Well, you're to keep an eye on the street this afternoon and report by phone if you see anything suspicious. Understand?

Paul: Yes, sergeant.

Paul was told to wear civilian clothes so that he would not be noticed. He decided to watch from the gardens opposite Faversham Street so that he could walk about without attracting attention.

At the end of each hour he phoned the police station to report to Sergeant Hawkins. At the end of four hours he had eaten six ice-creams, smoked twenty cigarettes, and walked round the park about fifty times. He was beginning to get very bored. At six o'clock he was relieved by another police officer so that he could go and get something to eat.

It was nearly half past eight before anything happened. It was beginning to get dark and he could just see three rather suspicious

looking men talking near some bushes at the far end of the park. Paul decided to wait and see what happened next. A few minutes later one of the men walked quietly from the bushes towards the road. Still Paul waited. The man looked around, opened the front gate of number 21 Faversham Street and walked round to the back of the house. Paul decided it was time to do something. Using a short cut that he'd known as a boy, he got to the back of the house just in time to see the man trying to climb through the windows. This is it, thought Paul. He saw himself being "congratulated by the chief constable and even being praised by old Hawkeye. He stepped forward.

Paul: May I ask what you are doing?

Man: Go away, you fool.

Paul: I'm a police officer.

Man: Good luck to you!

Paul: And here is my identification.

Man: Look, I'm afraid there's been a mistake.

Paul: You were about to break into this house.

Man: I can explain.

Paul: I'm going to arrest you ...

Man: No, listen. Let me explain.

Paul: ... and take you to the police station.

Man: We're ...

Paul: You are not obliged to say anything unless ...

Man: ... doing this ...

Paul: ... you wish to do so but ...

Man: ... because we have to.

Paul: ... what you do say will be written down ...

Man: We're trying to ...

Paul: ... and given in evidence against you.

Man: But we're not real burglars!

Paul: I'm not satisfied with your explanation.

Man: You haven't given me a chance to explain.

Paul: You were about to break into this house. I'm going to arrest

Man: Oh, for goodness' sake! Don't go through all that again. I'll come along with you and explain to someone at the police station.

Paul had a feeling that he'd seen the man somewhere before. Perhaps he was a well-known criminal! But at that moment the other two men appeared. When Paul saw that they came to speak to him so willingly, he began to think he had made a mistake. Imagine Paul's surprise when they explained that they were television actors and that the man Paul had arrested was a well-known television director. They were using the house to rehearse a scene for a new TV series. Paul didn't know what to say.

1st actor: Don't worry about it. You were only doing your job.

Paul: I really am terribly sorry.

Director: Never mind. We were only rehearsing.

1st actor: Hey, what's that man doing over there?

2nd actor: He's nothing to do with our series!

Paul and the others ran towards a man who was trying to open a window in one of the houses. After a brief struggle they overpowered him. Paul telephoned the police station and five minutes later Sergeant Hawkins arrived in a police car. He congratulated Paul warmly on his first arrest.

Sgt. Hawkins: We'll make a policeman of you yet, Williams.

Paul: Thank you, sergeant.

Sgt. Hawkins: By the way, have you got a TV set?

Paul: Yes, sergeant. Why?

Sgt. Hawkins: Well, if you switch on at 8.30 tomorrow you can watch the weekly detective serial.

Paul: Why, sergeant?

Sgt. Hawkins: Oh, I just thought you might like to see these friends of yours again.

Paul: You recognized them?

Sgt. Hawkins: They don't call me Hawkeye for nothing, you know! But don't worry. I can keep a secret. I'll see that you get all the credit.

New words and expressions

force	short for police force
closely	with great attention
give up	stop doing something, admit defeat. Here means leaving the police force
early turn	early duty or shift
deal with	attend to
alphabetical order	i.e. A first, B second, etc.
"Hawkeye"	friendly name (nickname) given to someone who notices everything. We often say that such a person has "eyes like a hawk."
petty thefts	small things stolen
over	during
civilian clothes	ordinary clothes, not his policeman's uniform
without attracting attention	without being noticed
get bored	lose interest (because nothing is happening)
bushes	small trees
relieved	replaced (by another policeman)
congratulated	praised

a short cut	a way that shortens the distance
evidence	proof
identification	document proving you are who you say you are
rehearse	practice
break into	enter (a house) by force without permission
be about to	be on the point of
for goodness' sake!	exclamation of annoyance or surprise
never mind	don't worry
struggle	fight
overpower	restrain by force, make someone submit by physical force
warmly	enthusiastically
switch on	turn on (the TV)
serial	programme in several episodes
credit	thanks, praise

We'll make a policeman of you yet

We think you will eventually become a good policeman

They don't call me Hawkeye for nothing

This is one of the reasons why people call me Hawkeye

Questions and exercises

A. Comprehension questions

1. How long has Paul Williams been a policeman?
2. Why did Paul think of giving up after nine months?
3. Why was Paul the last one to receive his orders?
4. How does Paul know Faversham Street?
5. Why did Paul wear civilian clothes?
6. What explanation did the man give for breaking into the house?
7. What was he, in fact?
8. What were the three men doing?
9. What was the real burglar doing?
10. Did Sergeant Hawkins arrive on foot?

B. Use *since*, *for* and *ago* to complete the following sentences:

1. Paul has been a policeman _____ ten years.
2. He has been a policeman _____ 1962.
3. He joined the police force ten years _____.
4. He has been waiting for his orders _____ three o'clock.
5. He went to the park two hours _____.
6. He has been there _____ five o'clock.
7. He has been there _____ two hours.
8. He lived in Faversham Street twenty years _____.

C. Change the following sentences into the passive:

Example:

The men robbed the house.

The house was robbed by the men.

1. The chief constable was congratulating him.
2. He dealt with the men in alphabetical order.
3. The sergeant told Paul to wear civilian clothes.
4. They won't notice you.
5. Another police officer relieved him.
6. I'll write down what you say.
7. The four men overpowered the burglar.
8. They call me "Hawkeye."

D. Change the verb into the continuous (-ing) form:

1. Paul thought of giving up.
2. Paul sat round a table with his colleagues.
3. I've eaten an ice-cream.
4. It began to get dark.
5. The men walked quietly towards the road.
6. They tried to open one of the windows.
7. The burglars broke into a house.
8. Paul does his job well.

Keys to exercises

A.

1. For ten years.
2. Because he couldn't get used to the hours he had to work.
3. Because they were given in alphabetical order.
4. Because he was born there.
5. So that he would not be noticed.
6. He said that he and his friends were practising a burglary.
7. A television actor.
8. They were rehearsing a scene for a new TV series.
9. He was trying to open a window in one of the houses.
10. No, he arrived in a police car.

B.

1. for
2. since
3. ago
4. since
5. ago
6. since
7. for
8. ago

C.

1. He was being congratulated by the chief constable.
2. The men were dealt with in alphabetical order.
3. Paul was told by the sergeant to wear civilian clothes.
4. You won't be noticed.
5. He was relieved by another police officer.
6. What you say will be written down.
7. The burglar was overpowered by the four men.
8. I'm called "Hawkeye".

D.

1. Paul was thinking of giving up.
2. Paul was sitting round a table with his colleagues.
3. I've been eating an ice-cream.
4. It was beginning to get dark.
5. The men were walking quietly towards the road.
6. They were trying to open one of the windows.
7. The burglars were breaking into a house.
8. Paul is doing his job well.