THE FLATMATES
Language point:
Time expressions

BBC WORLD SERVICE
LEARNING ENGLISH
The Flatmates – Time expressions

You can see this language point online at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode76/languagepoint.shtml

Background
There are a great variety of expressions that are used to refer to time: a selection is presented here. Most of them function as adverbials or prepositional phrases.

For information about adverbials, go to:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/learnit/learnitv279.shtml

For information about prepositions of time, go to:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode44/languagepoint.shtml

Referring to the past

a short time ago:
this means something was recent.
Example:
I've already heard the news. She told me a short time ago.

the other day:
this means that something was recent, without saying exactly which day.
Example:
I went shopping the other day.

ages and ages ago:
this means something was not recent; it happened a long time ago.
Example:
I've known about it for a very long time. She told me ages and ages ago.

many moons ago:
this means something was not recent; it happened a long time ago.
Example:
Many moons ago, he told me the story of his life.
### Referring to the present

**for the time being:**
at the moment, until something changes.
Example:  
*For the time being*, I’m catching the bus to work, but I hope to get a bicycle soon.

**these days:**
the current period of time. NOTE: we *don’t* usually say *in these days*.
Example:  
*These days* I’m happy at work, but there were times in the past when I was unhappy.

**in this day and age:**
the present era; the current period of time in history.
Example:  
*In this day and age* it is normal for women to be senior managers, but it wasn’t always like that.

### Very soon or immediately

**as soon as possible:**
this is often a polite way to ask someone to do something soon.
Example:  
Could you please return the books to me *as soon as possible*?

**straight away:**
immediately.
Example:  
Let’s call him *straight away*.

**in a minute or two / in a second or two:**
shortly; very soon. It is common to be a little vague when talking about time, so we use ‘or two’.
Example:  
Sorry to keep you waiting. I’ll be with you *in a minute or two*. 

---

The Flatmates  © BBC Learning English  Page 3 of 5  
bbclearningenglish.com/flatmates/archivelanguagepoint.shtml
### Referring to the future

**by the end of the month:**  
something will happen before this current month finishes.  
Example:  
The new restaurant will be open **by the end of the month**.

**this time next year:**  
about one year from now.  
Example:  
**This time next year**, we'll be millionaires!

**in the not too distant future:**  
fairly soon.  
Example:  
I'll be seeing my sister **in the not too distant future**.

### Duration (a length of time)

**Not much longer / not any more / not any longer:**  
these all mean that a period of time for something needs to end soon.  
Example:  
I **can’t wait any longer**, I’ll have to leave in a minute or two.

**For the foreseeable future:**  
a period of time from now into the future, a future that is near enough to be reasonably sure what will happen.  
Example:  
I’m going to continue working here **for the foreseeable future**. I have no plans to change my career and my school is happy with my work.

**For as long as anyone can remember:**  
this means that no-one can remember a time when this thing did not exist or happen.  
This expression is not always used literally: it simply means a period of time that started a long time ago.  
Example:  
**For as long as anyone can remember**, fish and chips has been the national food of Britain.
Would you like to try an online quiz about this language point? Go to:
http://bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode76/quiz.shtml

Or you can download the quiz from:
http://bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/flatmates/episode76/quiz.pdf

More on this language point:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/learnit/learnitv233.shtml
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/learnit/learnitv273.shtml