

The Past Perfect Tense

Introduction

1) We use the past perfect to show clearly that one past event happened before another past event. We use the past perfect for the earlier event.

When I arrived at the party, Tom wasn't there. He had gone home. (=Tom went home at 10.00, I arrived at 11.00.)

2) The past perfect is formed with the auxiliary verb *had* and *the past participle* (third column in the list of irregular verbs). Questions are formed by inverting the subject and *had*. Negatives are formed with *not*. Contracted forms are used.

(?) Had Kate gone to bed when you arrived home?

(+) Yes, she had. She had gone to bed when I arrived home./She'd gone to bed.

(-) No, she hadn't. She hadn't gone to bed when I arrived home.

The past perfect (I had done) is the past of the present perfect (I have done). Compare these situations:

Present	Past
<i>-I'm not hungry. I've just had breakfast.</i>	<i>-I wasn't hungry. I'd just had breakfast.</i>
<i>-Your room is dirty. You haven't cleaned it for months.</i>	<i>-Your room was dirty. You hadn't cleaned it for months.</i>

The past perfect is often used with verbs of thinking like *to think, know, be sure, realize, remember, suspect, understand etc.*

Sue was sure she hadn't locked the door.

When I got home I realized I'd left my computer at Starbucks.

Note that it is not necessary to use the past perfect if we use *before* or *after* to make the time sentence clear, although many speakers do so to show a strong connection between the two events.

Pam left her house before her parents arrived. OR Pam had left her house before her parents arrived.

Short Story Dialogue

The past perfect is used in daily life, though in some situations the past simple can be used instead.

- *Why didn't Ann take Spanish classes last semester?*
- ***Because she'd taken them at the beginning of her studies.***
- ***Had she completed the course successfully?***
- ***Yes, she had! She'd passed it with a perfect score! She hadn't done a single mistake.***
- *Wait, I heard that she didn't pass the exam.*
- *I don't know what you're talking about. **The teachers had never been so happy to have a student like her.***
- *Maybe that's not Ann I'm talking about... I've forgotten the name of the girl!*

Independent Practice - Past perfect tense

1) Use *before* or *after*.

- a. It was 11 o'clock when Pete left for his night shift. You came home at midnight. Pete had gone you came back.
- b. It was 8 a.m. when the lessons started. You came to school twenty minutes earlier. Lessons had started you came to school.
- c. It was a busy afternoon for you. But in the evening you had a nice bath. You had a nice bath you had had a busy afternoon.

2) Write the correct sentence.

a. They didn't want to eat my cake. (they/just/to finish/their dinner).
b. My mom wasn't at home when I came back from school. (she/just/to go/out).
c. I was very happy to see Nate. (I/not to see/him/for 3 years).
d. We arrived late. (the movie/already/to begin).

3) Answer the questions.

a. What had you done right before college graduation?
b. What had you done right after college graduation?
c. Had you cleaned your apartment before you went on a summer vacation?

Independent Practice: Answers - Past perfect tense

1) Use *before* or *after*.

- a. It was 11 o'clock when Pete left for his night shift. You came home at midnight. Pete had gone **before** you came back.
- b. It was 8 a.m. when the lessons started. You came to school twenty minutes earlier. Lessons had started **after** you came to school.
- c. It was a busy afternoon for you. But in the evening you had a nice bath. You had a nice bath **after** you had had a busy afternoon.

2) Write the correct sentence.

- a. They didn't want to eat my cake. **They'd just finished their dinner.**
- b. My mom wasn't at home when I came back from school. **She'd just went out.**
- c. I was very happy to see Nate. **I hadn't seen him for 3 years.**
- d. We arrived late. **The movie had already begun.**

3) Answer the questions. Sample Answers:

- a. I'd started studying for my exams right before college graduation.
- b. I'd had a huge party right after college graduation.
- c. Yes, I'd cleaned my apartment before I went on a summer vacation.