

Narrative Tenses by UCAR

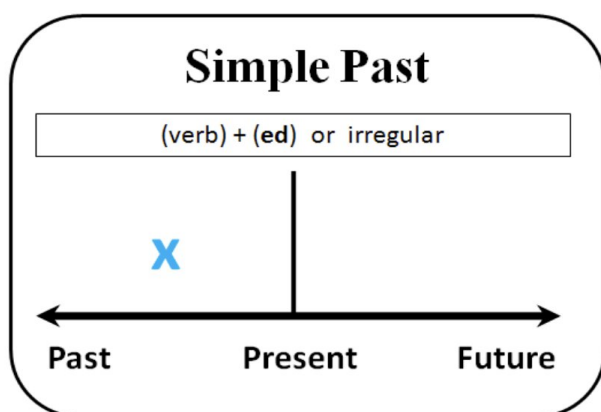
<i>past simple</i>	<i>were, lived, worked, saw, rushed, discovered, felt, called said, got back, borrowed, went, had</i>
<i>past continuous</i>	<i>were driving, was sitting</i>
<i>past perfect</i>	<i>had found, had been stolen (passive), had broken down, had been burgled (passive)</i>

EXAMPLE:

Yesterday I **woke up** and the sun **was shining**. I **got up** and **had** a shower. While I **was having** my shower, I **remembered** that **I'd had** a very strange dream.

More Examples:

1. I had been playing football for years before I broke my leg.
2. While I was doing my homework, my sister called me.
3. She had taken a cooking lesson only once before she cooked for me.
4. I bought a new laptop after I had been using my old one for years.
5. The stylist had already cut the girl's hair before she changed her mind.
6. By the time my guests arrived, I had already started eating.



Use the **past simple** for completed actions in the past which tell the main event in a story.

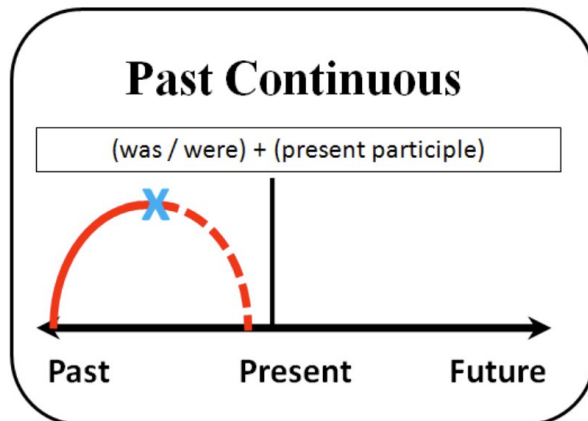
I **picked up** the phone and **ordered** a pizza.
 When I **saw** the boy coming towards me, I **said** hello.
 She **took** a deep breath, **tried** to calm down and then **spoke**.

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[was/were] + [present participle]

*While I **was studying**, my friends **were playing**.*

*She **was working** on an email when the fire alarm rang.*

*The team **was playing** well until the second half.*

*The days **were getting** shorter as winter approached.*

Verbs you cannot use in the past continuous tense

Some `verbs` **cannot** be used in any continuous tense, including the past continuous tense. These are called **stative verbs** (non-continuous verbs.)

Stative verbs are less like actions and more like states or feelings. They describe continual states of mind, such as opinions, needs, or awareness.

Some of the most common examples of stative verbs include:

- *believe*
- *dislike*

- *hate*
- *involve*
- *know*
- *like*
- *love*
- *need*
- *prefer*
- *realize*
- *seem*
- *understand*
- *want*

Because stative verbs are inherently continuous, it sounds odd to put them in a continuous tense. Avoid using the above words in the past continuous—you can use them in the simple past instead.

I ~~was understanding~~ math class until we started fractions.

INCORRECT

*I **understood** math class until we started fractions.*

CORRECT

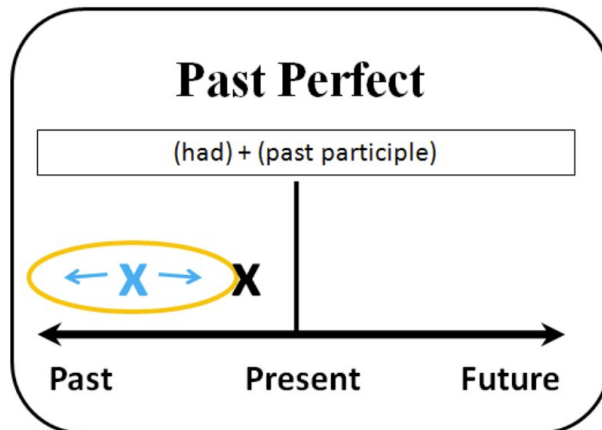
Use the past continuous

a) to set the general scene of a story

The music **was playing** softly, and the guests **were arriving** one by one.
The wind **was blowing** gently and the birds **were singing** the best songs ever.
He **was moving** very fast, **looking** around and **giving** orders to the other police officers around.

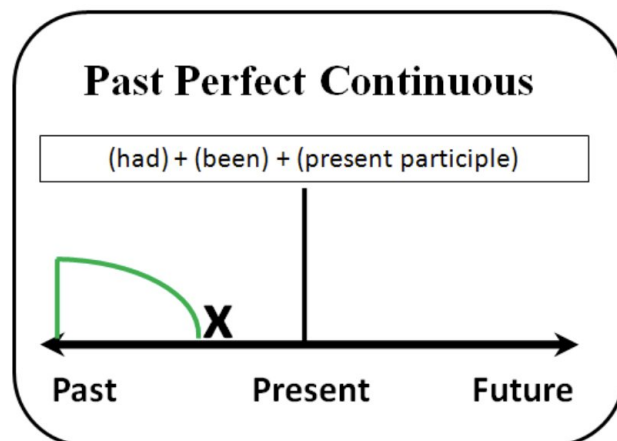
b) to talk about actions in progress at or around a particular point in a story, often interrupted by another (shorter) action or event (usually in the past simple).

He **was talking** loudly when the waiter brought his food.
Everybody **was working** in the office when the electricity went off.
She **was making** jokes and **telling** anecdotes when the teacher asked her a difficult question.



Use the **past perfect** to talk about actions or situations that were completed before another action in the story. The actions are often mentioned out of time sequence, and the past perfect makes the order clear.

When I **got** to the restaurant, all my friends **had eaten** and some of them **had left**.
Before I called him, I **had prepared** a farewell speech.
She went to bed and took a good night sleep after she **had finished** all the housework.



Use the **past perfect continuous** to talk about longer actions or situations which started before and continued up to a point in the story.

She **had been studying** for hours when she found out the exam was cancelled.
They **had been talking** about the details of the party for a couple of hours , so when I asked them whether they wanted a break, they all agreed.

We Use Narrative Tenses When We Talk About The Past. We Can Use Them To Tell Stories Or To Describe Past Events, Including Personal Old Memories.

Which tenses are used in the narrative tenses?

The past simple, the past continuous, the past perfect, and past perfect continuous.

Examples:

1 We **arrived** at the airport and **checked in**.

2 We **were having** dinner when the plane hit some turbulence. At nine o'clock most people on the plane **were reading** or **were trying** to sleep.

3 When we arrived at the airport, we suddenly realized that we'd left one of the suitcases in the taxi.

4 We'd **been flying** for about two hours when suddenly the captain told us to fasten our seat belts because we were flying into some very bad weather.

Uses of the Narrative Tenses:

1 We use **the past simple** to talk about consecutive actions or situations in the past, i.e. for the main events in a story.

2 We use **the past continuous** (was / were + verb + -ing) to describe a longer continuous past action or situation which was in progress when another action happened, or to describe an action or situation that was not complete at a past time.

3 We use **the past perfect** (had + past participle) to talk about the 'earlier past', i.e. things which happened before the main event(s).



4 We use **the past perfect continuous** (had been + verb + -ing) with action verbs (go, play, watch, etc.) to talk about longer continuous actions or situations that started before the main events happened and continued up to that point. Non-action verbs (e.g. be, have, know, like, etc.) are not normally used in the past continuous or past perfect continuous.

Past perfect simple or past continuous?

Sally was crying because she'd been reading a very sad book. Sally didn't want to see the film, because she'd already read the book.

- The past perfect continuous emphasizes the continuation of an activity. The past perfect simple emphasizes the completion of an activity.

We use the **past perfect** ...

1. ... to describe actions or situations which happened a long time ago.
2. ... to describe past actions which are relevant in the present.
3. ... when we are talking about the past and we want to talk about something that happened before this time.

UCAR says `EXERCISE TIME` :)

First Time Buyers

Last year, my wife and I (1) *bought / were buying* our first house. We (2) *had already been living / were already living* together for 5 years before we bought our house, so we (3) *knew / were knowing* how to live together. I'll never forget the first house we (4) *looked / had looked* at. It (5) *was / was*



being a small house in the suburbs with small windows. While we (6) *were walking / had walked* around the house, I (7) *noticed / was noticing* how dark and depressing it (8) *was / had been*. I (9) *was always living / had always lived* in a house with a lot of light and big windows, so I instantly (10) *hated / was hating* it. We (11) *saw / had seen* a few more houses after that which were all quite nice. We (12) *ended / had ended* up buying the second house that we (13) *visited / were visiting*. We (14) *had been seeing / had seen* it twice before we (15) *bought / had bought* it, just to be sure. I (16) *had been dreaming / was dreaming* of this day for a long time. Now, we have moved in. I'm really happy.

3A

GRAMMAR BANK

narrative tenses: past simple, past continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous

narrative tenses

- 1 We **arrived** at the airport and **checked in**. 3.10
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- 3 When we arrived at the airport, we suddenly realized that we'd **left** one of the suitcases in the taxi.
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past perfect simple or continuous?

Lina was crying because she'd **been reading** a very sad book. 3.11
Lina didn't want to see the film, because she'd already **read** the book.

- The past perfect continuous emphasizes the continuation of an activity. The past perfect simple emphasizes the completion of an activity.

T

- a Circle the correct verb form.



Meg and Liam McGowan (got) / were getting a nasty surprise when they ¹had checked in / were checking in at Heathrow airport yesterday with their baby, Shaun. They ²had won / won three free plane tickets to Rome in a competition, and they ³were looking forward to / had been looking forward to their trip for months. But, unfortunately, they ⁴had been forgetting / had forgotten to get a passport for their son, so Shaun couldn't fly. Luckily, they ⁵had arrived / were arriving very early for their flight, so they still had time to do something about it. They ⁶had run / ran to the police station in the airport to apply for an emergency passport. Meg ⁷was going / went with Shaun to the photo booth, while Liam ⁸had filled in / was filling in the forms. The passport was ready in an hour, so they ⁹hurried / were hurrying to the gate and ¹⁰got / had got on the plane just in time.

T

Put the verb in brackets in the past perfect simple (had done) or continuous (had been doing). If you think both are possible, use the continuous form.

- His English was very good. He'd **been learning** it for five years. (learn)
- 1 I was really fed up because we **'d been queuing** for hours. (queue)
 - 2 She **went to the police to report** that someone **had stolen** her bag. (steal)
 - 3 It **'d been raining** all morning. **The streets were wet** and there were puddles everywhere. (rain)
 - 4 She got to work late because she **'d left** her phone at home and **had had to** go back and get it. (leave, have to)
 - 5 I almost didn't recognize Tony at the party. He **'d changed** a lot since I last saw him. (change)
 - 6 The tourists' faces **were very red**. They **'d been sitting** in the sun all morning and they **hadn't put on** any sun cream. (sit, not put on)
 - 7 I **could see** from their expressions that my parents **had been arguing**. (argue)
 - 8 Jess **had a bandage on her arm** because she **'d fallen** off her bike that morning. (fall)
 - 9 I **was amazed** because I **'d never seen** such an enormous plane before. (never see)
 - 10 How long **had** you **been walking** before you realized that you were lost? (walk)

← p.28