

GRAMMAR

The past perfect

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_2102G

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can identify and form the past perfect tense and explain when to use it.
- I can use the past perfect and past simple to order events in the past.



Warm-up

Match the words to their definitions. **Complete the activity** in the yellow box.



1 **reliable**

2 **chemistry**

3 **polished**

4 **cabinet**

5 **vapour**

a a wooden box for storing things

b small drops of liquid in the air

c something you can trust to work every time

d very shiny

e the science that studies how chemicals react

You are going to read **a text about the invention of photography**.

Do you know anything about this topic? Discuss as a class before reading the texts on the next slides.

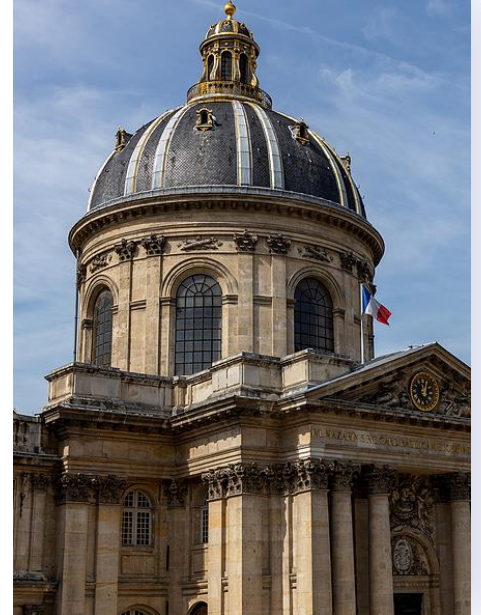
Reading (1)

Read the text about the **history of photography**. Answer the questions in the box.

In 1839, Louis Daguerre presented the first photographs to the French Academy of Sciences.

5 He had spent years trying to find a practical, reliable way to make photographs using light and chemistry, along with another inventor called Nicéphore Niépce.

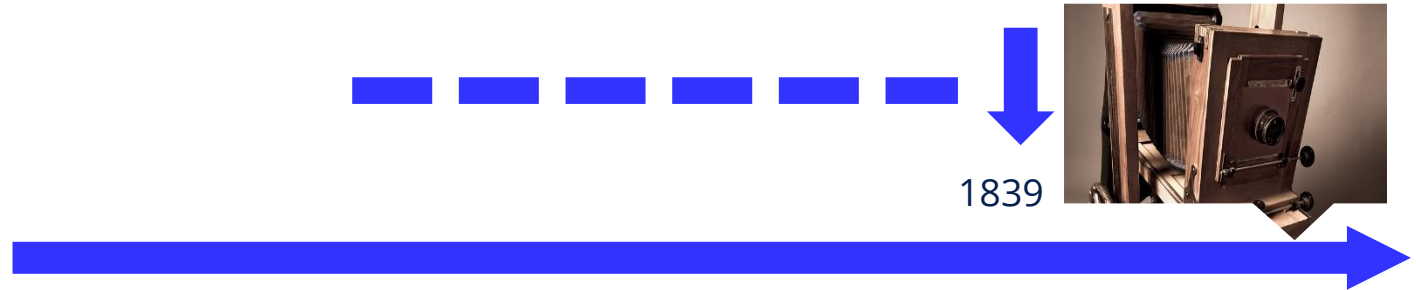
10 Niépce died in 1833, but Daguerre continued to work. He could produce an image on highly polished silver-covered plates, but the images were not very clear...



1. Who did Daguerre show his photographs to in 1839?
2. What problem did Daguerre face in his work?

Comparing the past perfect and past simple

Look at the timeline and complete the blue box.



Daguerre **had spent years** trying to make photographs using light and chemistry.

Daguerre **presented photographs** to the academy.

- We use the past perfect with the past simple to show two past actions in relation to each other.
- Look at the highlighted sections above. **Identify** the **past simple** and **past perfect** tenses.

Reading (2)

Read the next part of the text, which follows on from the first text and describes **Daguerre's discovery**. **Answer the questions** in the boxes.

5 ...One day, Daguerre left a silver plate in the chemical cabinet. When he took it out again, he noticed that the image on the plate had become darker and much more visible. He guessed that a chemical had reacted with the silver plate, but he didn't know which one! After a lot of trial and error, he understood what had happened.

10 A thermometer in the cabinet had broken a few weeks before, and mercury had spilled on the shelf. He had forgotten to clean it up, and so the mercury vapours had made the image on the silver plate darker.



1. Where did Daguerre leave the silver plate?
2. What did he notice when he took the plate out?
3. Which chemical in the cabinet made the image on the plate darker?

Using the past perfect

Read the sentences below (from left to right). Complete the blue boxes.

Daguerre **noticed**...



...that the image **had become** darker.

After a lot of trial and error, he **understood**...



...what **had happened**.

- For each of the sentences above, **identify**:

- the **more recent** past action
- the **earlier** past action

- We use the **past perfect** along with the **past simple** to **order past events**.
- The _____ tense is used to describe **an action that happened before another action in the past**.

Forming the past perfect

Read the example sentence below, then complete the blue box.

A thermometer **had broken** and some mercury **had spilled** on the shelf.

Forming the past perfect

Subject



Auxiliary verb



Past participle

- **Identify** the **subject**, **auxiliary verb** and **past participle** in each of the examples of the past perfect above.
- What **auxiliary verb** do we use to form the past perfect? Complete the rule.



After a lot of **trial and error**, he understood what had happened.

Do you think it was easy or difficult for Daguerre to find out what had happened to the silver plate?

What do you think he did in order to find out?



Fill in the gaps

1. **Transform** the verbs in parentheses into the past perfect or past simple.
2. **Compare** your answers with your classmate(s) **in breakout rooms** or **as a whole class**.

1 Not long after I left the house, I _____ (**realise**) that I _____ (**forget**) my purse.

2 She _____ (**hurt**) her ankle while she was running a few weeks ago, probably because she _____ (**not, warm up**) properly beforehand.

3 His dad _____ (**be**) an engineer before he _____ (**decide**) to give up his job and start painting, his true passion!

4 We _____ (**do**) a lot of research before we _____ (**move**) abroad, but it still took a surprisingly long time to get used to our new home!

5 I _____ (**write**) a lot of essays during my Bachelor's degree, but I really _____ (**struggle**) in the first semester of my master's because the standard was much higher.

Write about a major event in your life

Complete the writing activity below, then share your text with the class.



Think about an important event in your life. There are some prompts below.

Use the past perfect and past simple to describe the event itself, and the time before the event.

1



Your wedding

2



Your graduation day

3



The first day in your job

4



Moving away from home

5



A trip abroad



End of the lesson

Idiom

It's not rocket science!

Meaning: Something isn't difficult

Example: It won't take you long to learn - it's not rocket science!



Additional practice



Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences with one verb in the **past perfect** and one verb in the **past simple**.

- 1 I _____ (**cook**) a delicious meal but when my partner came home she said she _____ (**eat**) at work and she wasn't hungry.
- 2 I _____ (**want**) to visit the USA for years and when I _____ (**go**) it was as good as I had hoped.
- 3 Bob _____ (**go**) to bed early because he _____ (**not sleep**) very well the night before.
- 4 Sarah _____ always _____ (**want**) to watch The Matrix but she _____ (**be**) bored after the first twenty minutes.
- 5 They _____ (**read**) a lot of guidebooks before they _____ (**travel**) to Japan but they still had no idea what to do when they arrived there.



Living up to expectations

Choose **one** of the **questions** to answer with your classmates.

Is there a film you had always wanted to watch that wasn't as good as you had hoped?



Is there a place you had always wanted to go that was as good as you had hoped?



Put the events in chronological order

Put the events that led to Daguerre's discovery in order.

1

2

3

4

A

Daguerre took the silver plate out of the cabinet. He noticed that the image on the plate had become darker and more visible.

B

Daguerre tried out a lot of different combinations of chemicals. He realised that mercury was the chemical that had produced the image.

C

A thermometer in the chemical cabinet broke and mercury spilled on the shelf. Daguerre didn't clean it up.

D

Daguerre left a silver plate in his chemical cabinet.



Order the text

Read about a trip to Beijing and **put the text in the correct order.**

1

2

3

4

A

After we had had breakfast, we met our tour guide and went for a walk in the city.

B

Finally, our guide stopped at a small restaurant and we had some delicious Chinese tea. We had never drunk it before and it was so tasty.

C

We had learnt a little Mandarin before our trip, so we were happy that we could read some of the signs while we were walking around.

D

When we arrived in Beijing, it was morning and we felt great. We had travelled in business class so we had slept for most of the flight. But we were really hungry!



What had you never done?

Think about **three things** you had never done before you **visited** a certain place and **make sentences** using the **past perfect** and the **past simple**.



I had never eaten sushi before I went to Japan.

I had never seen really tall buildings before I visited my country's capital city.

- Before I went to...
- Before I visited...
- I had never tried
- I had never eaten
- I had never drunk



Practise the past perfect

Complete the sentences below so that they are true for you.

Before I joined this class today, I had already...



When I went to bed last night, I realised that I had...



Answer key

P.3: 1. (c) 2. (e) 3. (d) 4. (a) 5. (b)

P.4: 1. The French Academy of Sciences 2. The images he produced weren't very clear

P.5: Past simple: Daguerre presented... Past perfect: Daguerre had spent years...

P.6: 1. In the chemical cabinet 2. He noticed that image was darker 3. Mercury

P.7:

Sentence 1: (more recent) Daguerre noticed... (earlier) that the image had become darker

Sentence 2: (more recent) ...he understood (earlier) what had happened

The past perfect tense is used to describe an action that happened before another action in the past

P.8:

Example 1: (Subject) A thermometer in the cabinet (auxiliary) had (past participle) broken

Example 2: (Subject) some mercury (auxiliary) had (past participle) spilled

P.10: 1. realised/had forgotten 2. hurt/had not warmed up 3. had been /decided 4. had done/moved 5. had written/struggled



Answer key

Additional practice:

P.15: 1. cooked, had eaten 2. had wanted, went 3. went, had not slept 4. had wanted, was, 5. had read, travelled

P.17: 1. (c) 2. (d) 3. (a) 4. (b)

P.18: 1. (d) 2. (a) 3. (c) 4. (b)



Summary

The past perfect

- We use the past perfect along with the past simple to order past events.
- The past perfect tense is used to describe **an action that happened before another action in the past.**

Forming the past perfect:

- Subject + *had* + *past participle*



Vocabulary

reliable

chemistry

polished

cabinet

vapour

silver

mercury

to create

to react

visible

