

**LEVEL**  
**Intermediate**

**LANGUAGE**  
English





## Goals

- Can explain the difference in usage of the past simple and the past continuous.
- Can explain the differences between the past simple, the past perfect and the past perfect continuous and accurately combine these tenses in a sentence.







## Preview and warm-up

- In this lesson, we will **review the tenses used to describe the past** in English.



I **hadn't written** a report in ages, so this one **took** me a long time!



## Review of the past simple

- The **past simple** is used for **completed** or **finished actions** in the **past**.
- We often see it with a **past time phrase**.
- I **did** my homework **last night**.
- He **took** his exam **in January last year**.

### Further examples

I ordered new computers on Wednesday.

She interviewed a candidate yesterday.

Did you eat all the chocolates?

They didn't attend the meeting last week.





## Review of the past continuous

- The **past continuous** is used to describe an action that was in **progress over a period of time in the past**.
- We often use it with the conjunction **while**.
  - He **was listening** to music while driving to work.
  - They **were talking** to each other during the meeting.

### Further examples

I **was playing** tennis with a friend.

She **was listening** to music on her phone.

They **were living** in France at the time.

Were you **writing** that report all day?





## Past simple and past continuous

- A **past continuous** verb is commonly used **with a past simple verb** and the conjunction ***when***.
- The **past simple interrupts** the action described in the **past continuous** tense.
- The **past continuous** is often also used to tell us what **was happening in the background**.

I **was working** on the report when I **got** a phone call from my boss.



The sun **was shining** and the birds **were singing** when I **left** the house this morning.



## Complete the sentences

**Complete the sentence using either the past simple or past continuous.**

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ (sit) at my desk, when a colleague \_\_\_\_\_ (send) me a very important email.

2. While she \_\_\_\_\_ (speaking) to a friend, the car door suddenly \_\_\_\_\_ (fly) open.

3. Where \_\_\_\_\_ (be) you when you \_\_\_\_\_ (hear) the tragic news about Michael?

4. While we \_\_\_\_\_ (live) in Denmark, we \_\_\_\_\_ (work) as consultants at a top firm in Copenhagen.

5. They \_\_\_\_\_ (make) such a racket, it \_\_\_\_\_ (be) almost impossible for me to get to sleep.





Write 5 sentences with both a past simple and a past continuous





Think of the last time...

....you had an accident?

What were you doing  
when it happened?

I was out  
running when,...

I was cutting  
vegetables  
when...

We were having  
a lovely day at  
the beach...



## Review of past perfect

- The **past perfect** is used to **describe an action** that **happened before** another action in the past.
- We form the **past perfect** using:
  - **subject + *had* + past participle**
- We often use it with the adverbs *already, still, just, never* and *ever*.

- **Had** you ever **worked** in sales before you joined us?
- I **had** definitely **seen** him before but I only met him at the conference.
- She **had** just **sent** the email when she realised that she **had forgotten** to attach the document.





## Review of past perfect

- A **past perfect** verb is commonly used together with a **past simple verb**.
- It can show the **order of events** in the past or that an action was **incomplete** when another took place.
- We often use it with the conjunctions *when* or *before*.

When the police **arrived**, the robbers **had** already **escaped**.



We **had** never **learnt** French before we **took** this course.



## Complete the sentence with the past simple or past perfect

1. By the time I called her, she \_\_\_\_\_ to leave the company.

a. decided

b. had decided

2. When the document finally \_\_\_\_\_, it was full of ridiculous mistakes.

a. arrived

b. had arrived

3. \_\_\_\_\_ the news before you went to bed?

a. Did you see

b. Had you seen

4. We \_\_\_\_\_ lunch together, then had an afternoon full of meetings.

a. had

b. had had



## Practise using the past perfect

Practise using the past perfect to describe what Louis and Susan found when they got home. Then, write 5 sentences using the past perfect with *had* and *hadn't*.

When we got home last night, the police were waiting at the front door.

The house lights were off and the neighbours were all standing around looking worried. What had happened?

Possible answer:

*When we got home last night, someone **had burgled** our house, they'd **stolen**....*





## Review of the past perfect continuous

- The **past perfect continuous** describes an action that was happening **over a period of time** until a **particular point** in the past.
- We often use it with **for** + a **period of time**.
- We form the **past perfect continuous** using:
  - **had + been + -ing form** of the verb

### Further examples

Eric was tired in the meeting. He'd been exercising all afternoon!

I'd been waiting for the bus for two hours before it came!

She'd been thinking about quitting her job before she got promoted.





## Comparing the past perfect and the past perfect continuous

- The **past perfect** emphasises the **result** of an action or event in the past.
- Whereas the **past perfect continuous** emphasises the **duration** of the action or event.



They **had decorated** the bedroom a lovely colour!

They **had been decorating** the bedroom all week long!







## Comparing the past perfect and the past perfect continuous

- When used with a verb in the **past simple**, the **past perfect** can show a link between **two events in the past**.
- Whereas the **past perfect continuous** gives the **background or reasoning behind** a past action.



I **ended up** missing my flight to Tokyo because I **had forgotten** to pack my passport!

I **was** so tired last night, as I **had been exercising** all day.





## Choose the correct tense

1. Last week, they cancelled that meeting again at the last minute! My colleagues were so mad because they'd \_\_\_\_\_ for it all week.

**a. prepared**

**b. been preparing**

2. We were absolutely starving! We hadn't \_\_\_\_\_ anything all day!

**a. eaten**

**b. been eating**

3. Thank goodness I found my phone! I'd \_\_\_\_\_ for it for ages!

**a. looked**

**b. been looking**

4. He'd \_\_\_\_\_ the room a total mess. It took her hours to tidy it up.

**a. left**

**b. been leaving**



## Complete the sentences

Read these situations and rewrite each sentence using the past perfect continuous and the past simple.

1. We were playing football and after an hour of play, it starts to rain.

A: We **had been playing** football for an hour when it **started** to rain.

2. We planned to meet Alex at the cinema. We waited for 30 minutes and then realised that we were at the wrong cinema.

A: We \_\_\_\_\_ for 30 minutes before we realised we \_\_\_\_\_ at the wrong cinema.

3. Alison used to work at a tech start-up. After 2 months, the tech start-up closes.

A: When the tech start-up \_\_\_\_\_, Alison \_\_\_\_\_ for them for 2 months.

4. I was at a conference last week. A speaker is half an hour into his talk and then a siren sounds

A: The speaker \_\_\_\_\_ for 30 minutes when a siren \_\_\_\_\_.

5. I started walking along a road and after 2 hours a car stops to pick me up.

A: I \_\_\_\_\_ for 2 hours when a car \_\_\_\_\_.



## Make your own sentences

Use these pictures to write 6 sentences that combine the past perfect continuous with the past simple.

*Example: She had been working at the company for 3 years when she got pregnant.*



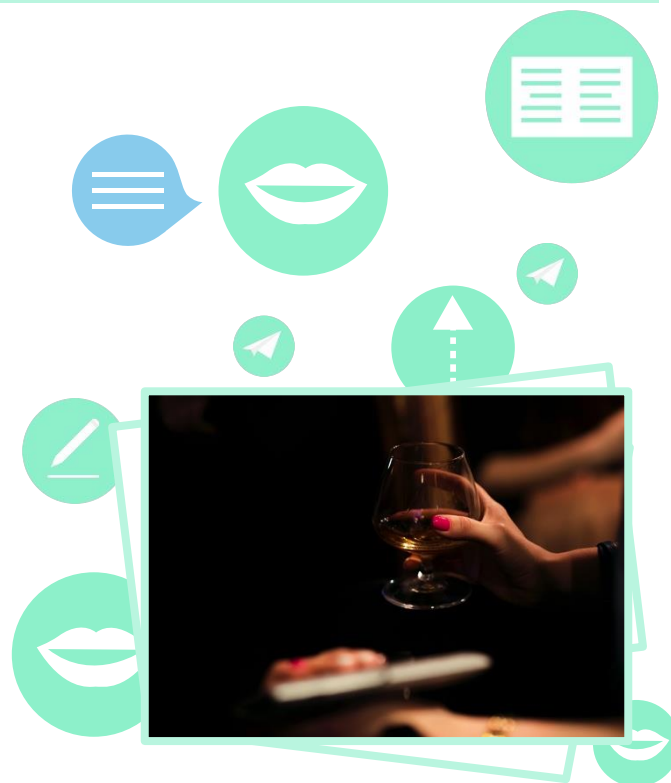


## A memorable time

Can you think of a funny story or a memorable moment in your life? Write a short paragraph using as many different tenses from the lesson as you can.

“ I **had been talking** to a guy online for a few weeks until finally **we decided** to meet each other for a drink. I **hadn't done** this before, so I **was** quite nervous.

While **we were having** a drink, I **spilt** my cocktail all over his trousers. He **was** so upset that he **left** me at the bar and **went** home to clean his trousers!

”



And finally...



Now you have reviewed all the past tenses!

Take turns with your classmates or teacher and say a sentence for each tense until everyone has had their turn.



## Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

no




## Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.  
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



If you have time, go over  
the most difficult slides again





## Answer key

### Exercise p.18

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. a

### Exercise p.13

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. a

### Exercise p.8

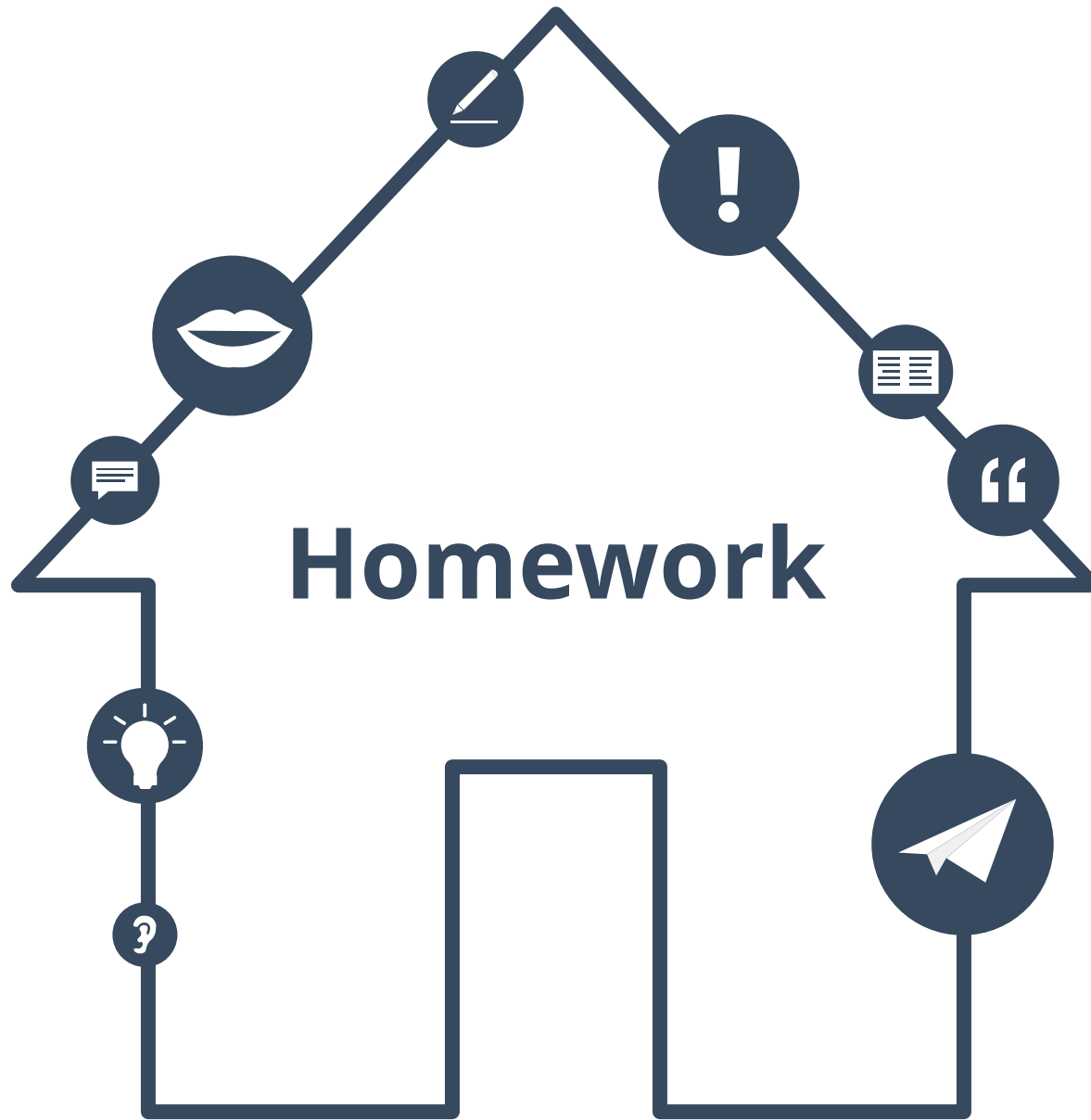
1. was sitting, sent
2. was speaking, flew
3. were, heard
4. were living, were working or worked
5. were making, was



## Answer key

### Exercise p.19

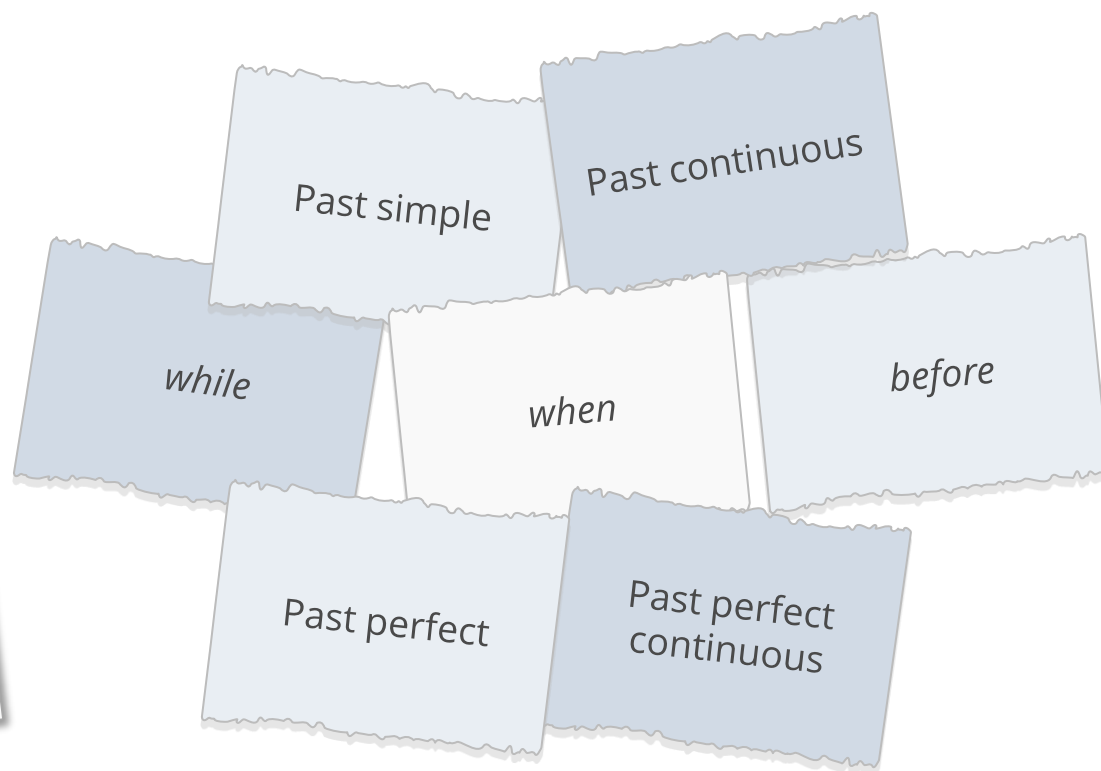
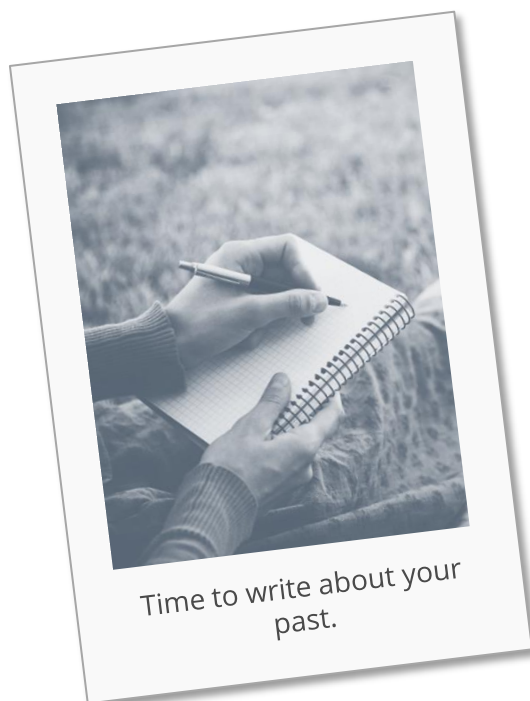
2. had been waiting, were
3. closed, had been working
4. had been speaking, sounded
5. had been walking, stopped (to pick me up)





## Describing yourself

In this lesson, we have reviewed the main tenses used for talking about the past. Write at least three sentences using each tense describing a time in your life.





## Writing about yourself

**Using your sentences from the previous homework activity, write two paragraphs that describe what you have been doing in your life.**

<input type="radio"/>	My life: I have been living in Canada for 10 years, but before that
<input type="radio"/>	I was living in the UK. I had been working for an oil company for 4
<input type="radio"/>	years when I got offered the chance to work for the Canadian
<input type="radio"/>	Mounted Police and I jumped at the opportunity. I spend my
<input type="radio"/>	days riding a horse through the mountains and I have just
<input type="radio"/>	recently done an advanced rescue course so that I can work in
<input type="radio"/>	the mountains.
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