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GRAMMAR

The past perfect

LEVEL
Upper-Intermediate (B2)

NUMBER
EN_B2_1032G

LANGUAGE
English

Learning outcomes

- I can form the past perfect and use it in a sentence.

- I can explain the differences between the past simple and the past perfect.

The past perfect

We use the **past perfect** tense to talk about an event that happened **before** another event **in the past**.

I found it so hard to concentrate in today's English lesson because **I hadn't eaten** anything this morning!

Forming the past perfect

- We form the **past perfect** with *had* + **past participle** of the main verb.

Subject	*had*	Past participle
I		**slept** poorly.
You		**spoken** to my mother.
He	**had**	**brought** flowers.
We		**asked** for help.
They		**taken** the train.

Forming the past perfect

- The **negative** form is *had* + *not* (*hadn't*) + **past participle** of the main verb.

Subject	*had not*	Past participle
I		**slept** poorly.
You		**spoken** to my mother.
He	**had not**	**brought** flowers.
We		**asked** for help.
They		**taken** the train.

Put the verb in parentheses into the past perfect

1 When I arrived at the theatre, the show _____ (*start*).

2 After they _____ (*eat*) the raw seafood, they started to feel ill.

3 Jane didn't arrive until I _____ (*leave*) the party.

4 All our plants died because we _____ (*not*, *give*) them enough water.

5 I _____ (*never, be*) abroad until my husband took me to Paris last year.

Talking about past events

- We use the **past simple** for an event that happened **at a specific time in the past**.
- Usually, we use a time phrase like *yesterday* or *last week* to show it is a **finished** time.

Yesterday, I **forgot** to set my alarm.

Last year, Tom **found** a better job.

Talking about past events

- When we talk about **past events**, we usually go in **chronological order**.
- This means we say what we **did first** and then what **happened after** it.

Yesterday, I **forgot** to set my alarm and **missed** my train.

Last year, Tom **found** a better job, so he **bought** a new car.

Talking about past events

- To use the **past perfect**, we need **two past events**, but we **don't** speak chronologically.
- Instead, we speak about the **last event** and what **had happened before it**.

I **missed** my train because I **had forgotten** to set my alarm.

Tom **bought** a new car once he **had found** a better job.

Talking about past events

- **Identify** the last event. Which **example** describes the events in **chronological order**?
- Which **example** describes the events in **non-chronological order**?

I ate my lunch, then I went to the meeting.

I went to the meeting after I had eaten my lunch.

Order the events

Identify the **past tenses** in each sentence. Then, **explain** the order of events.

1   I washed the floor as soon as the guests had gone.

2   We had sold all our furniture by the time we moved out.

3   After Tom had completed his work, he went to lunch.

4   I didn't say anything until she had finished talking.

Past simple or past perfect?

Put the verb in parentheses into the correct past tense.

1 I left my office and then _____ (*take*) the bus home.

2 Sam failed his exam because he _____ (*not*, *study*) hard enough.

3 The plane departed at 8 p.m. and _____ (*arrive*) in Paris three hours later.

4 The only thing in my fridge was a slice of pizza that I _____ (*not*, *eat*) the night before.

5 I didn't buy anything at the shop because I _____ (*leave*) my wallet at home.

Connect the past events

Complete the activity on your own. Then, **compare** answers in breakout rooms.

1 The film started. Then, I arrived at the cinema. > When I arrived at the cinema, the film **had** already **started**.

2 He brushed his teeth. Then, he went to bed. >

3 We left the map at home. We got lost. >

4 I learnt some Thai phrases. Then, I went to Thailand on holiday. >

5 I watched a really scary film. I couldn't sleep. >

6 I gave my friend the phone number. Then, I realised it was incorrect. >

Paying attention to meaning

The bomb **went off** when the police arrived.

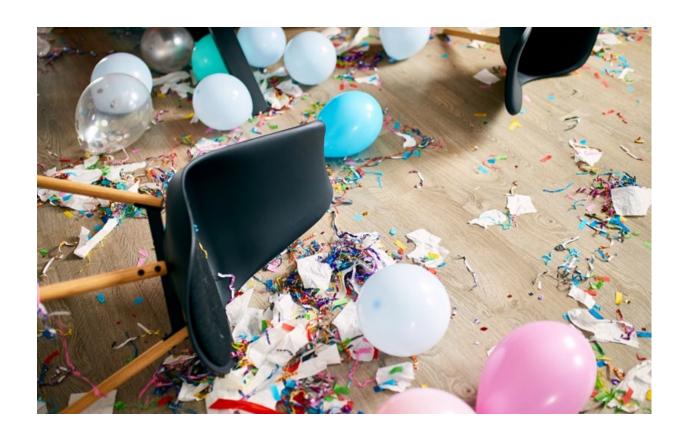The bomb **had gone off** when the police arrived.

- The past tense you use **changes** the meaning of the sentence.

- Discuss the **difference** in meaning above.

Look at the photo

Discuss what you think **had happened** before it was taken.

Common structures

- We often use the **past perfect** with the following structures.

- Note the use of the **different** past tenses to **order** the events.

By the time	Until
By the time you called me, I had already gone to bed.	**Until** I travelled to France last year, I had never heard French before.
Sarah had worked for several different companies **by the time** she turned 30.	He had worked at the company for 50 years **until** he retired last year.

Match the sentences

1 By the time I moved to Japan last year,

a until they finally decided to sell it.

2 He had been our CEO since 2012

b I had completed a basic Japanese course.

3 By the time she met her husband,

c the children had already made a mess in the living room.

4 They had lived in their house for twenty years

d until he decided to leave the company last year.

5 By the time he finished cleaning the house,

e Tina had been on hundreds of dates.

Complete each sentence for you

By the time I got my current job, I...

Until I started learning English at Lingoda...

Writing

1. **Write** a short paragraph about **a good day** you had recently.
2. **Share** your story with the class.

Write the events in chronological order.

Then, **change** the order of your events to include a past perfect.

Let's reflect

- Can you form the past perfect and use it in a sentence?

- Can you explain the differences between the past simple and the past perfect?

Your teacher will now make one suggestion for improvement for each student.

End of the lesson

Idiom

in the nick of time

Meaning: at the very last moment; only just in time

Example: We'd got out of the car just **in the nick of time**; minutes later it exploded!

Additional practice

Fill in the gaps

Use the correct form of the **past simple** or **past perfect**.

1. By the time we got to Glasgow, we _____ (*be*) on the bus for for 10 hours.

2. We were tired because we _____ (*catch*) the bus at 6:00 a.m.

3. We were glad to be at our destination, although we _____ (*see*) beautiful sights on the drive.

4. It was 8:00 p.m., and we _____ (*not eat*) since 12:00, so we _____ (*go*) to find a meal.

5. My friend Fiona _____ (*tell*) me to phone her after our arrival, so I called her.

Complete the sentence

Use the **past simple** or **past perfect** of the verb in parentheses.

1 I got home and realised that someone (*try*) to break into the house.

> I got home and realised that someone **had tried** to break into the house.

2 I celebrated on Saturday night because I (*pass*) my exam the day before.

>

3 I arrived at the theatre and a few minutes later the show (*start*).

>

4 When I married my husband last year, I (*be*) married twice before.

>

5 My flight arrived late because the aircraft (*break down*) earlier that day.

>

6 As soon as he (*see*) his mother, he began to cry.

>

Choose two questions

Ask a classmate.

What had you done by the time you went to bed yesterday?

What's one food you hadn't tried until recently?

What's a place you had never heard of until someone told you?

How many concerts had you been to by the time you turned 18?

Answer key

P. 6:
    1. had started
    2. had eaten
    3. had left
    4. hadn't given
    5. had never been

P. 10: **Chronological order:** *I ate my lunch, then I went to the meeting.*
    Non-chronological order: *I went to the meeting after I had eaten my lunch.*

P. 11: 1. *washed* = past simple; *had gone* = past perfect.
    First event = the guests left; second event = I washed the floor.
    2. *had sold* = past perfect; *moved out* = past simple
    First event = we sold our furniture; second event = we moved out.
    3. *had completed* = past perfect; *went* = past simple.
    First event = he completed his work; second event: he went to lunch.
    4. *had finished* = past perfect; didn't say = past simple
    First event = she finished talking; second event = I said something.

Answer key

P. 12:
1. I took
2. hadn't studied
3. arrived
4. hadn't eaten
5. had left

P. 13: **Suggested answers**:
2. He went to bed after he had brushed his teeth.
3. We got lost because we had left the map at home.
4. When I went to Thailand on holiday, I had already learnt some phrases in Thai.
5. I couldn't sleep because I'd watched a really scary film.
6. I realised the phone number was incorrect after I had given it to my friend.

P. 17: 1. b, 2. d, 3. e, 4. a, 5. c

Answer key

P. 23:   1. had been
2. had caught
3. had seen
4. hadn't eaten; went
5. had told

P. 24:   **Suggested answers**:
2. I celebrated on Saturday night because I had passed my exam the day before.
3. I arrived at the theatre and a few minutes later the show started.
4. When I married my husband, I had been married twice before.
5. My flight arrived late because the aircraft had broken down earlier that day.
6. As soon as he saw his mother he began to cry.

Summary

Forming the past perfect
- We form the **past perfect** with **had** + **past participle** of the main verb.
- The **negative** form is **had** + **not** (*hadn't*) + **past participle** of the main verb.
- e.g. *I **had eaten** lunch; She **hadn't played** tennis before.*

Reviewing when to use the past simple
- We use the **past simple** for an event that happened **at a specific time in the past**.
- When we talk about **past events**, we usually go in **chronological order**. e.g. *I ate my lunch then I went to the meeting.*

Using the past perfect
- To use the **past perfect**, we need **two past events**, but we **don't** speak chronologically.
- Instead, we speak about the **last event** and what **had happened before it**.
- *I went to the meeting **after I had eaten** my lunch. (*Event 1 = lunch; Event 2 = going to the meeting).

By the time and **until**
- We often use the **past perfect** with *by the time* and *until*. They show a clear **order** of events.
- ***By the time** you called me, **I had already gone** to bed.*
- ***He had worked** at the company for 50 years **until** he retired last year.*

Vocabulary

to concentrate

to fail

to go off

by

until

Notes