

GRAMMAR

Reviewing the past tenses

LEVEL

Upper-Intermediate
(B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_2122G

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

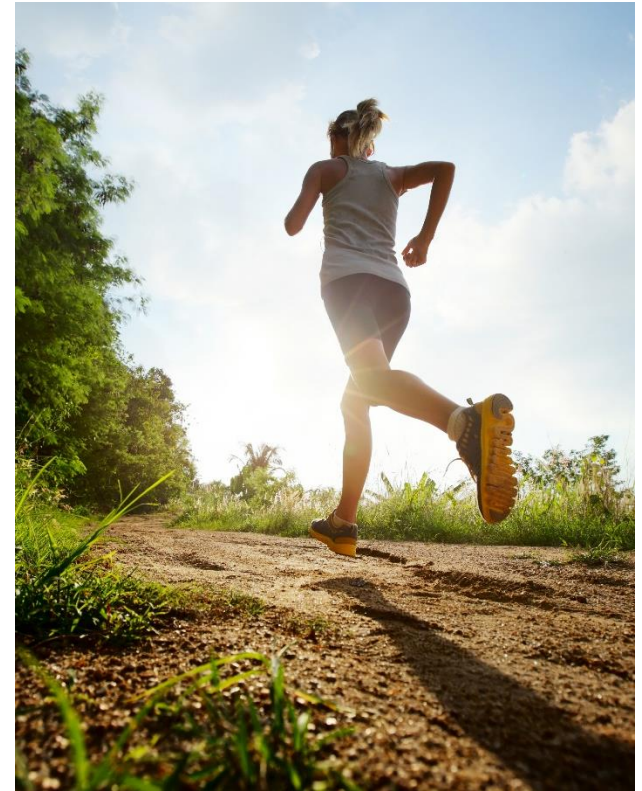
- I can explain the difference in usage of the past simple and the past continuous.
- I can explain the differences between the past simple, the past perfect and the past perfect continuous and use them in a sentence.



Warm-up

**What have you
already done
today?**

**Share your answer with the
rest of the class!**



Review: the past simple

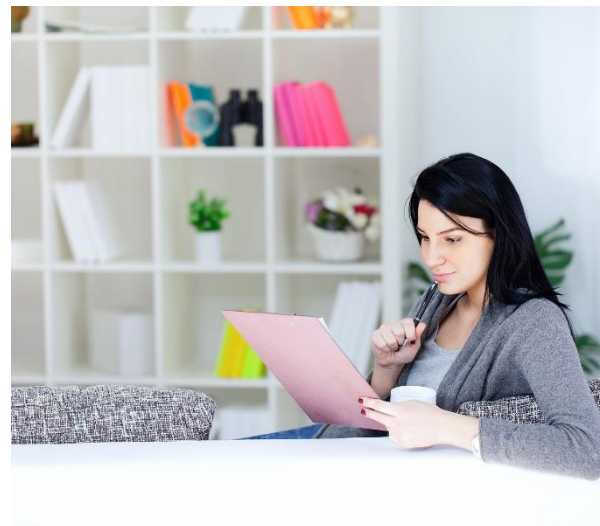
1. **Read** the sentences.
2. Then **review** the information in the blue box.

I **did** my homework **last night**.

She **took** her exam in January **last year**.

They **didn't attend** the meeting **last week**.

- The **past simple** is used for **completed** or **finished** actions in the past.
- We often see it with a **past time phrase**.



Review: the past continuous

1. **Read** the sentences.
2. Then **review** the information in the blue box.

She **was listening** to music **while** driving to work.

They **were talking** to each other during the meeting.

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

- 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**.



The past simple and the 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 used to tell us what was happening in the background.

past continuous

I **was working** on the report...

The sun **was shining** and the **birds were singing**...

She **was driving** to the airport...

We **were eating** at the restaurant...

past simple

...**when** I **got** a phone call from my boss.

...**when** I **left** the house this morning.

...**when** it **started** to rain.

...**when** my neighbour **called**.



Complete the sentences

Use either *the past simple* or *the past continuous* to complete the sentences.

- 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.



Think of the last time...

**...you had an
accident.**

**What were you doing when it
happened?**



Review: the past perfect

1. **Read** the sentences.
2. Then **review** the information in the blue boxes.

When the police arrived, the robbers had already escaped.

We had never learnt French before we took this course.

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

- 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*.



Multiple choice (1/2)

Choose the correct answer.

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 mistakes.

a. arrived

b. had arrived

3 _____ the news before you went to bed?

a. Did you see

b. Had you seen



Multiple choice (2/2)

Choose the correct answer.

1 We _____ lunch together, then had an afternoon full of meetings.

a. had

b. had had

2 She _____ to visit her sister in New York City before she travelled there last month.

a. never went

b. had never gone

3 When my parents _____, the kids had already gone to sleep.

a. arrived

b. had arrived



Practise using the past perfect

In breakout rooms or together as a class, **complete** the prompts in the pink boxes below.



Louis

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

The house lights were off, and the neighbours were all standing around looking worried!



Susan

Take **1-2** minutes to think about what might have happened.

Use the **past perfect** to describe what Louis and Susan found when they got home.

Use **had** and **hadn't**.

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

Review: the past perfect continuous

1. **Read** the sentences.
2. Then **review** the information in the blue boxes.

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!

- **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 with: **had + been + -ing form of the verb.**

The past perfect vs. the past perfect continuous

- **The past perfect** emphasizes the **result** of an action or event in the past.
 - When used with a verb in the past simple, **the past perfect** can show a link between **two events in the past**.
- **The past perfect continuous** emphasizes the **duration** of the action or event.
 - **The past perfect continuous** gives the **background or reasoning** behind a past action.

past perfect

They had decorated the bedroom a lovely colour!

I missed my flight to Tokyo because **I had forgotten** to pack my passport.

past perfect continuous

They had been decorating the bedroom all week long!

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



Transform the sentences

1. **Read** the situations. 2. **Rewrite** them using the *past perfect continuous* and *the past simple*.

- 1 We were playing football. After an hour of play, it started to rain.



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 before we realised that we were at the wrong cinema.



- 3 Alison used to work at the tech start-up. After her first two months, the tech start-up went under.



- 4 I went to a conference last week. A speaker was fifteen minutes into his talk when the fire alarm went off.



- 5 I started walking along the road and after two hours, a car stopped to pick me up.



- 6 I was working late one night when I heard someone breaking into the office.

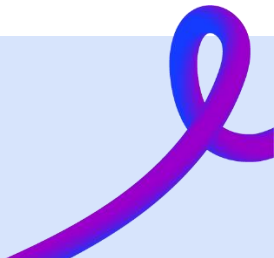




The tech start-up **went under**.



If a business or project **goes under**, it is unsuccessful and can no longer exist.



A memorable moment

**Think of a funny story or
a memorable moment in
your life.**

**Tell your classmates about it
using as many different tenses
from the lesson as you can!**





End of the lesson

Idiom

donkey's years

Meaning: for a very long time

Example: He's been working here for donkey's years!



Additional practice



Complete the sentences

1. **Complete** the sentences.
2. **Use** the correct tense.

- 1 Last week, they cancelled that meeting again at the last minute! My colleagues were so mad because they'd _____ (prepare) for it all week.
- 2 We were absolutely starving. We hadn't _____ (eat) anything all day!
- 3 Thank goodness I found my phone. I'd _____ (look) for it for ages!
- 4 He'd _____ (leave) the room a total mess. It took her hours to tidy up.
- 5 I had _____ (work) at the company for two years, when it went under.



5 sentences

Use the words below to **write 5 sentences** using both the *past simple* and *past continuous* tenses.



eat

forget

come

speak

know

get

drive

pay

buy



Take turns!

Take turns with your classmates or teacher to say a sentence for each tense covered in the lesson!

Which tense do you find the most challenging? Why?





Answer key

P.7: 1.) was sitting, sent 2.) was speaking, flew 3.) were, heard 4.) were living, worked 5.) were making, was

P.10: 1.) b 2.) a 3.) a

P.11: 1.) b 2.) b 3.) a

P.15: *suggested answers*

2.) We had been waiting for 30 minutes before we realised we were at the wrong cinema.

3.) Alison had been working at the tech startup for two months when it went under.

4.) I had been listening to a speaker at a conference for 15 minutes when the fire alarm went off.

5.) I had been walking along the road for two hours before a car stopped to pick me up.

6.) I had been working late in the office when I heard someone break in.

P.21: 1.) been preparing 2.) eaten 3.) been looking 4.) left 5.) been working



Summary

Reviewing the past simple and past continuous

- The **past simple** is used for **completed** or **finished** actions in the past. We often see it with a **past time phrase**. e.g. *I **did** my homework **last night**.*
- The **past continuous** describes an action that was **in progress over a period of time** in the past. We use it with **while**, e.g. *I **was playing** tennis with a friend **while** my brother **was watching** TV.*

Reviewing the past perfect simple

- The **past perfect** is used to describe an action that happened **before** another action in the past.
- We often use it with the adverbs: **already, still, just, never, and ever**.
- Commonly used with a past simple verb and with the conjunctions **when** or **before**.
- e.g. *When the police arrived, the robbers **had** already **escaped***

Reviewing 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**.
- e.g. *I'd **been waiting** for the bus **for two hours** before it came.*

Comparing past perfect simple and past perfect continuous

- The **past perfect simple** emphasises the **result** of an action. With a verb in the past simple, it can show a link between two events in the past. e.g. *They **had decorated** the bedroom a lovely colour.*
- The **past perfect continuous** emphasises the **duration** of the action or event. It gives the background or reasoning behind a past action, e.g. *They **had been decorating** the bedroom all week.*



Vocabulary

tragic

consultant

racket

to go off

to go under

