

GRAMMAR

# Past perfect in depth

**LEVEL**

Intermediate (B2)

**NUMBER**

EN\_B2\_3072G

**LANGUAGE**

English



## Learning outcomes

- I can use the past perfect tense in a variety of ways to talk about the past.
- I can express wishes and regrets using *I wish* and *if only*.

# Past perfect

In today's lesson you'll look at how the past perfect is used to:

- ...explain past events
- ...describe a change of plan or expectation
- ...express wishes and regrets
- ...emphasise a point



I'd been to Paris twice before, so I knew my way around.



# Explaining past events

Read the sentences. **Complete** the blue boxes.

She was disappointed **because** > she'd expected him to propose.

I had read great reviews, **so** > I was excited to see the play.

- Which **past tense** is used along with the past perfect in these sentences?
- What words are used to **link** the clauses in these sentences?
- What is different about the order of the clauses in these sentences?

- The past perfect **helps to explain** something in the past by describing the previous past event or situation that caused it.

# Describing a change of plan or expectation

Read the example sentences. Complete the blue box.

I'd planned to study medicine, until I fell in love with modern dance!

He had expected a promotion, but they gave it to someone else.

- For each sentence, state:
  - the original plan or expectation
  - the change of plan or expectation
- With a **linking word** like \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ we link a plan or expectation in the earlier past to a change that came later.

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# Fill in the gaps

**Complete the sentences** using the correct form of the verb in brackets (**past perfect** or **past simple**), as well as the correct linking word from the red box.

- 1 He \_\_\_\_\_ (**study**) Spanish for years, \_\_\_\_\_ he  
\_\_\_\_\_ (**have**) no problem travelling around South America.
- 2 We \_\_\_\_\_ (**consider**) staying in a hostel \_\_\_\_\_ we  
\_\_\_\_\_ (**realise**) how cheap hotels were.
- 3 He \_\_\_\_\_ (**hope**) that he would get a higher salary,  
\_\_\_\_\_ they only \_\_\_\_\_ (**offer**) him a small increase.
- 4 It \_\_\_\_\_ (**not, rain**) in months, \_\_\_\_\_ the grass in the  
public parks \_\_\_\_\_ (**be**) dry and brown.
- 5 It \_\_\_\_\_ (**be**) shocking that she lost the election, \_\_\_\_\_  
polls \_\_\_\_\_ (**predict**) that she'd win easily.

**so**  
**because**  
**until**  
**but**





# Talk about the past

Use the **past simple** and **past perfect** along with linking words *because*, *so*, *but* and *until* to describe...



...an unsatisfying dining experience

...an unexpected positive outcome

...one way your expectations have changed in the last few years

...a difficult trip

# Expressing wishes and regrets

**Read** the example sentences below. **Complete** the blue boxes.

**If only I had learnt Spanish!**

**I wish you had been here to see it!**

**If only we had booked a longer stay here!**

- Are the speakers describing a **real** past situation or event? Have these things happened?
- How do the speakers **feel**? For each sentence, suggest a reason as to why the speakers feel this way.

- We can **express wishes and regrets about the past** using the phrases \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with the past perfect.
- **If only** is slightly stronger than **I wish**.



# Expressing a wish for things to be different



We should do this more often – we never see you anymore!

Oh, **if only**! But it's so hard to find a good babysitter these days.

We often use the phrase **if only** on its own, as a response.

What do the speakers wish for? Why do they think it might not be possible?

# Using *I wish* and *if only*

1. **Write sentences** for the following situations using *I wish* and *if only*.
2. **Come up with** a backstory for each situation, being as creative as you like!

Why didn't you  
tell me  
sooner!

I missed my  
flight because  
I slept in.  
Disaster!

I really regret  
leaving my old  
job.

I didn't know  
she was only  
staying for  
one night!





# Complete and match the sentences

**Form sentences** with *I wish* and *if only* using the prompts (1-5).

**Match** them with a corresponding statement (a-e).

1 to park – car – in front – my gate

2 to lose – phone number

3 to leave – early – this morning

4 to study – harder – school

5 to spend – more time – grandmother

a She probably thought I wasn't interested.

b My grades weren't good enough to get into the university programme I wanted.

c Now I'll have to find another space down the street. So annoying!

d You only realise how important someone is when you can't see them anymore.

e I didn't have a chance to say goodbye and I won't see him again until Christmas.

## Emphasising a point

**Inversion** means putting the verb before the subject. It's used in many different situations in English, for example, when forming questions.

We also use inversion when we put **a negative adverb or adverb phrase** at the beginning of a sentence for **emphasis**.

On the next slide, we will look at how we can do this with the past perfect.



**Never had I been** so happy as when you came home from holidays early and surprised me!



# Using inversion for emphasis

- Which **negative adverb or adverb phrase** begins these example sentences?
- What word is used to **link** the clauses in each sentence?
- **Note:** When there is more than one verb (an auxiliary and main verb) the auxiliary verb is inverted.

Inversion	What it expresses
<b>Never had I heard</b> such terrible music <b>as when</b> I went to that concert in London!	The past perfect here indicates time <b>up until a certain point in the past</b> . Inversion emphasises just how terrible the music was.
<b>No sooner had I arrived</b> at the office <b>than</b> my boss ran over to me!	The past perfect here describes the <b>earlier of two actions</b> . Inversion emphasises the immediacy and rushed nature of the encounter.



# Multiple choice

1 Never \_\_\_\_\_ I been as satisfied as when I \_\_\_\_\_ my driving test first go and won that bet with my best friend.

- a. had; passed      b. was; pass      c. did; had      d. hadn't; passed

2 \_\_\_\_\_ had I been as terrified \_\_\_\_\_ after that horrible vampire movie.

- a. No sooner; than      b. Sooner; than      c. Never; than      d. Never; as

3 No sooner \_\_\_\_\_ I entered the lecture theatre \_\_\_\_\_ I realised my mistake.

- a. than; have      b. had; than      c. have; than      d. had; then

4 \_\_\_\_\_ had the train left the station than she \_\_\_\_\_ that she didn't have her bag.

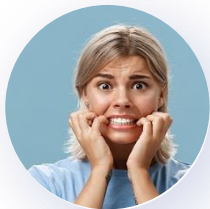
- a. No sooner; notices      b. No sooner; noticed      c. Never; noticed      d. Not sooner; notice



# Complete the sentences

Here are some more examples. **Complete** the last two sentences so that they are true for you.

1



**Never had I felt** so out of place **as when** I accidentally walked onto the set of a modelling shoot!

2



**No sooner had I turned off** the light and got into bed **than** the doorbell rang.

3



**Never had I been so tired as when...**

4



**No sooner had I opened my laptop to start work than...**





# Past perfect review

Complete the statements about the past perfect by matching the sentence halves.

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | We use <b><i>I wish</i></b> and <b><i>if only</i></b> + <b><i>past perfect</i></b>                           | a | to describe a change in plans or expectations.                                      |
| 2 | We use a <b><i>negative adverb or adverb phrase</i></b> + <b><i>inversion</i></b>                            | b | to show that an earlier past event caused a more recent event or situation.         |
| 3 | The <b><i>past perfect</i></b> is used along with the <b><i>past simple</i></b>                              | c | using the auxiliary verb <i>had</i> + past participle.                              |
| 4 | We can use the <b><i>past perfect</i></b> with a linking word like <b><i>but</i></b> or <b><i>until</i></b>  | d | to emphasise a point.   |
| 5 | We can use the <b><i>past perfect</i></b> with a linking word like <b><i>so</i></b> or <b><i>because</i></b> | e | to talk about things which did or didn't happen in the past and that we now regret. |
| 6 | The <b><i>past perfect</i></b> is formed   | f | to order past events.   |



# Past perfect review

**Rewrite** these sentences so that they use the past perfect. There may be multiple options.

1 I'm sad that I didn't go to the party.



I wish I'd gone to the party.

2 I was in a car accident on the way to work. I was very unsettled the whole day.



3 I wanted to become an engineer. Then I discovered my passion for art.



4 I didn't study. I failed the final exam.



5 I got off the plane and immediately started sweating.



6 I should have thought to bring an umbrella!





# End of the lesson

Idiom

***water under the bridge***

**Meaning:** Use this to describe past events that don't matter any more, often disagreements that have been resolved.

**Example:** We had an argument and stopped talking for a while, but that's all water under the bridge now!



# Additional practice



# Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

- 1 The garden \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) very wild and overgrown, because nobody \_\_\_\_\_ (to take care of) it in months.
- 2 We \_\_\_\_\_ (to plan) to take the train, but we \_\_\_\_\_ (to end up) flying instead.
- 3 No sooner \_\_\_\_\_ (she, to close) the door than \_\_\_\_\_ (she, to realise) that her keys were inside.
- 4 Never \_\_\_\_\_ (I, to experience) such rudeness in my life!
- 5 I wish \_\_\_\_\_ (I, to be) there for the ceremony!





## Discuss



**Do you think it's better to regret something that happened, or that didn't happen?**



**What's one thing you would change about the past week if you could?**





# Answer key

**P.4:** The simple past; because and so.

**P.5:** 1. *Expected plan:* to study medicine; *change of plan:* they fell in love with dance. 2. *Original plan:* he thought he would be given a promotion; *change of plan:* someone else got the promotion instead. *Linking word:* until, but

**P.6:** 1. had studied; so; had 2. had considered; until; realised 3. had hoped; but; offered 4. hadn't rained; so; was 5. was; because; had predicted

**P.8:** 1. The speakers are not describing a real event: Suggested answers: *they are expressing regret, they wish they had done something, like learning a language (sooner):* if only and I wish.

**P.9:** Suggested answers: *I wish / if only you'd told me sooner; I wish/if only I hadn't missed my flight/slept in; I wish/if only I hadn't left my old job; I wish/if only I'd known she only staying for one night*

**P.11:**

1. I wish (they) hadn't parked in front of my gate (c)
2. I wish I hadn't lost her phone number (a)
3. I wish he hadn't left so early this morning. (e)
4. If only I'd studied harder at school. (b)
5. If only I'd spent more time with my grandmother. (d)



# Answer key

**P.14:** 1. (a) 2. (d) 3. (b) 4. (b)

**P.16:** 1. (e) 2. (d) 3. (f) 4. (a) 5. (b) 6. (c)

**P.17:**

2. I was very unsettled the whole day, because I'd been in a car accident on my way to work. / I'd been in a car accident on the way to work, so I was very unsettled the whole day. 3. I'd wanted to become an engineer until I discovered my passion for art. 4. I failed the final exam because I hadn't studied. / I hadn't studied, so I failed the final exam. 5. No sooner had I got off the plane than I started sweating. 6. If only I'd brought an umbrella!

Additional practice

**P.21:** 1. was; had taken care of 2. had planned; ended up 3. had she closed; she realised 4. had I experienced 5. I had been



# Summary

## Explaining a past event:

- The past perfect **helps to explain** a past event or situation by describing the previous past event or situation that caused it.
- *She was disappointed because she'd expected him to propose that evening.*

## Describing a change of plan or expectation:

- With a **linking word** like *until* or *but*, we link a plan or expectation in the earlier past to a change that came later.
- *I'd planned to study medicine **until** I fell in love with modern dance!*

## If only and wish:

- We can **express wishes and regrets about the past** using the phrases *if only* and *wish* with the past perfect. *If only* is slightly stronger than *I wish*.
- ***If only** I had learnt Spanish!; I **wish** you had been here to see it!*
- We often use the phrase *if only* on its own, as a response.

## Emphasising a point:

- **Inversion** means putting the verb before the subject. We use inversion when we put **a negative adverb or adverb phrase** at the beginning of a sentence for **emphasis**.
- ***Never had I heard such terrible music as when I went to that concert in London!***
- ***No sooner had I arrived at the office than my boss ran over to me!***



# Vocabulary

to propose

unsatisfying

If only!

out of place

unsettled

