

simple past  
tense

present/simple  
perfect  
tense

präteritum

perfekt

Past

„die Vergangenheit“

## What are Präteritum and Perfekt?

Both tenses talk about the past, but they are used differently.

- **Das Perfekt** is the spoken past. You use it almost always in everyday conversation.
  - Example: "Yesterday I have watched a film." ("Gestern habe ich einen Film gesehen.")
- **Das Präteritum** is the narrative past. It is used in writing, stories, fairy tales, and news reports.
  - Example: "Yesterday I watched a film." ("Gestern sah ich einen Film.")

Key Rule for A1/A2: In daily life and speaking, you almost always use Perfekt.

## How do you form the Perfekt?

# Perfekt :

The Perfekt is always made of two parts:

1. A helping verb (auxiliary verb): haben OR sein (conjugated in the present tense)
2. The Past Participle (Partizip II) of the main verb

The Formula: haben/sein + Past Participle (Partizip II)

Examples:

- Ich habe Deutsch gelernt. (I have learned German.)

- Helping verb = habe (from *haben*)
- Past Participle = gelernt (from *lernen*)

- Sie ist nach Hause gegangen. (She went home.)

- Helping verb = ist (from *sein*)
- Past Participle = gegangen (from *gehen*)

sein

(Sie/er/es — ist  
Ich — bin  
du — bist

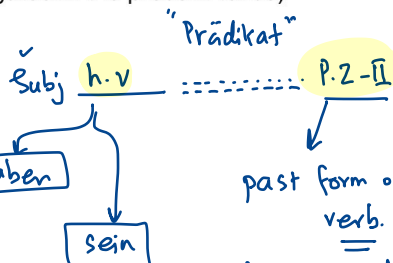
(Ihr — seid  
Sie/Sie — sind)

Ⓐ → Ⓑ

"sein"  
(movement)

⓪ → zzzz

Ⓐ → "haben"  
(static)



past form of verb  
(completed verb)  
- gesehen  
- gemacht

## When do you use "haben" or "sein"?

This is a very important rule!

Use <u>HABEN</u> with: 70%	Examples (Partizip II)
Most verbs →	gemacht (did), gespielt (played), gelernt (learned)
Reflexive verbs (sich waschen) →	<u>sich gewaschen</u> (washed oneself)
Transitive verbs (verbs with a direct object) →	ein <u>Buch</u> gelesen (read a book)

Use <u>SEIN</u> with: 30%	Examples (Partizip II)
Verbs of movement (to a destination) →	gehen → <u>gegangen</u> (walked), fahren → <u>gefahren</u> (drove), reisen → <u>gereist</u> (traveled)
Verbs of <u>state change</u> →	<u>aufgestanden</u> (got up), <u>eingeschlafen</u> (fell asleep)
The verbs: <u>sein</u> , <u>bleiben</u> , <u>werden</u> , <u>passieren</u> ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	<u>gewesen</u> (been), <u>geblieben</u> (stayed), <u>passiert</u> (happened)

Memory Aid: Use sein for movement or a change of state.

(sein = to be)  
(has been)  
↳ gewesen (p.z II)

Subj haben/sein ————— P.z II

Sub ist ..... gewesen  
(Ali ist immer gut gewesen)

## How do you form the Past Participle (Partizip II)?

Here is how to form it for **regular verbs**:

ge + verb stem + t

- lernen -> gelernt
- machen -> gemacht
- spielen -> gespielt

lernen → (ge lern t) ← (partizip II)

Attention! For **separable verbs** (trennbare Verben like *anrufen*):

The "ge-" goes in the middle.

- aufstehen -> aufgestanden → auf(ge)standen
- anrufen -> angerufen → an(ge)rufen

**Irregular verbs** must be memorized:

- sehen -> gesehen (ge)
- essen -> gegessen (gege)
- schlafen -> geschlafen (ge)

"gehen" → (gegangen)  
(ge-gang-en)

# Präteritum

## How do you form the Präteritum?

The Präteritum needs only one word (the conjugated verb in the simple past).

For regular verbs:

Verb stem + (e)te + personal ending

- te / personal ending*
- ich lernte (I learned)
  - du lernst *lernen → lern'te' → Ich*
  - er/sie/es lernte
  - wir lernten
  - ihr lerntet
  - sie lernten

For common irregular verbs (must be learned):

- sein*
- ich war (I was - from *sein*) *Ich bin müde*
  - ich hatte (I had - from *haben*) *↳ Ich war müde*
  - ich ging (I went - from *gehen*) *(gehen → ging)*

## When to use which? A Simple Rule for A1/A2

Situation	Use:	Example
✓ In <u>conversation</u> , when <u>speaking</u>	PERFEKT <u>      </u>	"What did you do yesterday?" ("Was hast du gestern gemacht?")
✓ In <u>stories</u> , <u>fairy tales</u> , <u>books</u>	PRÄTERITUM <u>          </u>	"Once upon a time there was a princess..." ("Es war einmal eine Prinzessin...")
✓ With the verbs: <u>sein</u> , <u>haben</u> , <u>modal verbs</u> ( <u>können</u> , <u>müssen</u> , <u>wollen</u> , etc.)	Often <u>PRÄTERITUM</u> (even when speaking!)	"I was hungry." ("Ich <u>hatte</u> Hunger.") / "She <u>wanted</u> ice cream."

The Simple A1/A2 Rule of Thumb:

- Are you speaking? -> Use Perfekt
- Are you reading a book? -> You see Präteritum
- Are you using *sein*, *haben*, *möchten*? -> You can often use Präteritum

### Example Sentences for Comparison

English Meaning	Perfekt (Spoken)	Präteritum (Written/ Narrative)
I ate pizza.	Ich habe Pizza gegessen.	Ich aß Pizza.
We went to the cinema.	Wir sind ins Kino gegangen.	Wir gingen ins Kino.
He was tired.	(Less common in speech)	Er war müde. (Common!)
She had a book.	(Less common in speech)	Sie hatte ein Buch. (Common!)



### Summary & Learning Tips

1. Perfekt = Speaking, Präteritum = Writing/Stories.
2. Perfekt needs two words: *haben/sein* + Past Participle.
3. Use "*sein*" for movement/change, "*haben*" for almost everything else.
4. Past Participle for regular verbs: *ge* + stem + *t* (gelernt).
5. With *sein*, *haben*, modal verbs, you will often hear Präteritum (*war*, *hatte*, *wollte*) even in speech.
6. For beginners: Focus on learning and using Perfekt for conversation. It is more important right now.