

## 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:

- A helping verb (auxiliary verb): haben OR sein (conjugated in the present tense)
- 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.)

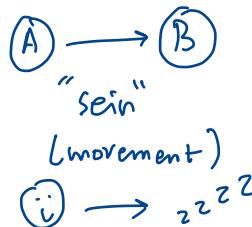
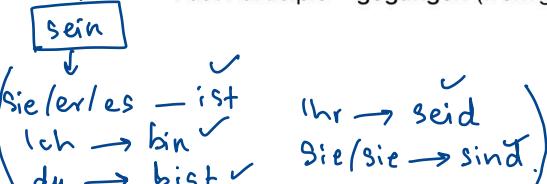
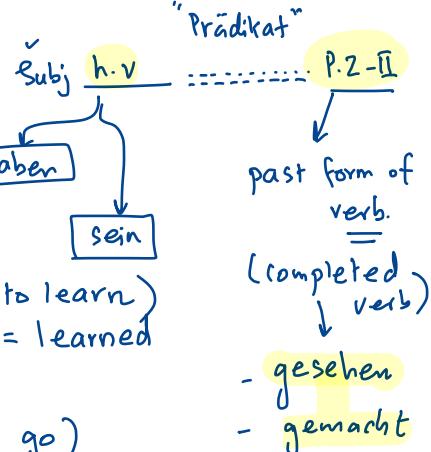
• Helping verb = habe (from haben) → (lernen = to learn)

• Past Participle = gelernt (from lernen) → gelernt = learned

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

• Helping verb = ist (from sein) → (gehen → to go)

• Past Participle = gegangen (from gehen)



## 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)                | →   | "sich gewaschen" (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), <u>gefahren</u> (drove),<br>reisen ↗ <u>gereist</u> (traveled) |
| Verbs of state change   | →   | aufgestanden (got up), <u>eingeschlafen</u> (fell asleep)  |
| The verbs: <u>sein</u> , <u>bleiben</u> , <u>werden</u> ,<br><u>passieren</u> ✓ ✓ ✓ | ✓   | gewesen (been), <u>geblieben</u> (stayed),<br><u>passiert</u> (happened)                         |

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

Subj haben/Sein → P.Z II

( sein = to be )  
 ( has been )  
 ↗ gewesen (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 → (gelernt) *(partizip II)*

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

The "ge-" goes in the middle.

- aufstehen -> aufgestanden → auf<sup>(ge)</sup>standen
- anrufen -> angerufen → an<sup>(ge)</sup>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

• ich lernte (I learned)  
te / personal ending

• du lernest

lernen → lern<sup>t</sup>e → Ich

• er/sie/es lernte

• wir lernten

• ihr lerntet

• sie lernten

For common irregular verbs (must be learned):

• 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                                | "What did you do yesterday?" ("Was hast du gestern gemacht?")                   |
| In <u>stories</u> , <u>fairy tales</u> , <u>books</u>  | PRÄTERITUM                             | "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> (können, müssen, wollen, etc.) | Often PRÄTERITUM (even when speaking!) | "I was hungry." ("Ich <u>hatte</u> Hunger.") / "She wanted <u>ice cream</u> ."  |

## 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/<br>Narrative) |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| I ate pizza.           | Ich habe Pizza gegessen.       | Ich aß Pizza.                      |
| We went to the cinema. | Wir sind ins Kino<br>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.<br>(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.