**Past Tense – Reading Material**

**Overview:**

A: I was drunk yesterday.

B: I knew it. You had this wide smile throughout our discussion A: I actually planned to get drunk last week but didn't get to it. B: So, you chose yesterday of all the days.

A: Yes, I thought I'd do myself a favor and be entertained.

B: Oh entertained, we were!

In the above dialogue, you can guess the tense especially with signal word such as ' yesterday ' and 'last week'.

One of the most commonly used tenses, this tense is used for completed actions in the past.

**Objectives:**

This reading material is designed to help you:

* Understand and learn to apply the past tense in all its different forms.
* Use this tense more effectively in real time experiences.

**Past Tenses**

The past tense is a verb tense expressing activity, action state or being in the past. In English, there are two types of past tense:

1. Simple past

2. Present tense

**Simple past include:**

 [Past Simple](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_simple)

 [Past Progressive](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_continuous)

 [Past Perfect](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect)

 [Past Perfect Continuous](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect_cont)

**The present tenses:**

 [Present Perfect Continuous](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/present_perfect_cont)

 [Present Perfect](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/present_perfect)

Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous (Progressive) both refer to the present and to the past.

 I have just eaten my chocolate bar.

 Mike has never seen a car like this before.

**Past Simple**

Basic form

Subject + Verb (past form)

Examples:

 I was sleepy.

 He didn't learn any Italian when he was in Italy two year ago.

 I went to the cinema, bought popcorn and watched a movie.

Usage: to talk about actions that happened at a specific time in the past. The actions can be short or long. There can be a few actions happening one after another.

1. [Events in the past that are now finished](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_simple#use1)

2. [Situation in the past](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_simple#use2)

3. [A series of actions in the past](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_simple#use3)

**Use 1: Past actions that are now finished**

The first use of the Past Simple to express actions that happened at a specific time in the past. The actions can be short or long.

 John cut his finger last week. short

 I went to college 3 years ago. long

 He ate the dinner 1 hour ago. short

 I slept well last night. long

**Use 2: Situation in the past**

Another use of this tense is talk about situations in the past.

 I lived in New York for 10 years (I don't live there anymore).

**Use 3: A series of actions in the past**

The Past Simple can also be used with a few actions in the past happening one after another.

 He entered a room, lit a cigarette and smiled at the guests.

**Form**

Forming a sentence in the Past Simple is easy. To form a declarative sentence, all you need is the subject of the sentence (e.g. *I*, *you*, *he*, *a dog*) and the past form of your verb (e.g. *was*, *talked*, *swam*). Questions and negative sentences are only a little more difficult, because they require an [auxiliary verb](http://www.englishtenses.com/auxiliary_verbs).

**Declarative Sentences**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **Verb (past form)** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. | e.g. *walked, went, took,* etc. |

Ex: I ate the cake yesterday.

**Time Expressions**

**Common time expressions** (time adverbials) in the Past Simple are:

 yesterday

 the other day

 just now

 the day before yesterday

**Questions**

**DID**+**Subject**+**Verb (present form)** e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc.e.g. *go, make, have,* etc. Ex: How long did he work there?

**Negative Sentences**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **Didn't** | + | **Verb (present form)** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  | e.g. *go, make, have,* etc. |

Ex: He didn't get any good grades when he attended school.

**Past Progressive**

Basic form

Subject + WAS/WERE + Verb (continuous form) Examples:

 The man was singing.

 I was resting in the garden when it started to rain.

Usage: to talk about activities that lasted for some time in the past. The actions can be interruped by something or can be happening at the same time.

1. [Duration in the past](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_continuous#use1)

2. [Interrupted actions in progress](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_continuous#use2)

3. [Actions in progress at the same time](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_continuous#use3) in the past

4. [Irritation](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_continuous#use4)

5. [Polite question](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_continuous#use5)

**USE 1: Duration in the past**

We use the Past Continuous to talk about actions or situations that lasted for some time in the past, and whose duration time is unknown or unimportant.

 I was watching TV yesterday in the evening.

 She was sleeping on the couch.

 The dog was barking.

**USE 2: Interrupted actions in progress**

The Past Continuous is often used when one action in progress is interruped by another action in the past. The Past simple is used in such sentences. We usually

use when or while to link these two sentences.

1.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sentence in Past**  **Continuous** | **+** | **WHEN** | **+** | **Sentence in** [**Past Simple**](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_simple) |
| e.g. *I was singing* |  | e.g. *my wife came home* |

2.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WHEN/WHILE** | **+** | **Sentence in Past**  **Continuous** | **+** | **Sentence in** [**Past Simple**](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_simple) |
|  | e.g. *I was*  *singing* | e.g. *my wife came home* |

 I was talking with James when the telephone rang.

 While Angelica was playing tennis, the plane crashed.

 When Bob was painting windows, it started raining.

**USE 3: Actions in progress at the same time**

We also use this tense to talk about two or more activities happening at the same. We usually use when or whileto link the two sentences.

1.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sentence in Past**  **Continuous** | **+** | **WHEN/WHILE** | **+** | **Sentence in Past Continuous** |
| e.g. *I was singing* |  | e.g. *She was cooking* |

2.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WHEN/WHILE** | **+** | **Sentence in Past**  **Continuous** | **+** | **Sentence in Past Continuous** |
|  | e.g. *I was singing* | e.g. *She was cooking* |

 I was watching TV and Barbara was reading a book.

 The family was having dinner and talking.

 When Bob was painting windows, Mary was working in the kitchen.

**USE 4: Polite questions**

If we want to ask a polite question, we can use the Past Continuous.

 I was wondering if you could open the window.

 I was thinking you might help me with this problem.

Even though the sentences have a Past Continuous form, they refer to the present moment. Their meaning is similar to the "could you" sentences, but they are more polite.

**USE 5: Irritation**

Remember that you can also express irritation over somebody or something in the past.

 She was always coming late for dinner!

**FORM**

To form a sentence in the Past Continuous, you need:

1. The proper conjugation of the **auxiliary verb "to be"** in the past form

2. The Present Participle of your verb (verb + **ing**)

**1. Auxiliary verb "to be"**

The past form of the auxiliary verb "to be" is:

1. For the first and third person singular: "was"

2. For all others: "were"

 She **was** always coming late for dinner!

 You **were** always coming late for dinner!

**2. The Present Participle**

The present participle is a verb form that appears with the [present tenses](http://www.englishtenses.com/page/present_tenses.html). The present participle is formed by adding **-ing** to the verb.

 talk + ing = talking

 be + ing = being

There are [exceptions](http://www.englishtenses.com/present_participle_exceptions).

**Declarative Sentences**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **WAS/WERE** | + | **Verb + ING** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  | e.g. *walking, going, taking,* etc |

Ex: While Lisa was cleaning the living room, Sam was washing the dishes.

**Questions**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WAS/WERE** | + | **Subject** | + | **Verb (continuous form)** |
|  | e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. | e.g. *walking, going, taking,* etc. |

Ex: Was she going to the theater when it started raining?

**Negative Sentences**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **WASN'T / WEREN'T** | + | **Verb (continuous form)** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  | e.g. *walking, going, taking,* etc. |

Ex: He asked me why I wasn't having dinner at the [HOTEL](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_continuous)

**Past Perfect**

Basic form

Subject + HAD + Verb (past participle form)

Examples:

 I had written the letter before you came home.

 If she had studied hard, she would have passed the English language exam.

 I wish I had been brave enough.

 Mary looked as if she had not slept for 48 hours.

Usage: to emphasize that an action in the past finished **before** another action in the past started. This tense is also used in reported speech, third conditional sentences, or to show dissatisfaction with the past.

1. [Completed action before another action in the past](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect#use1)

2. [Third conditional](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect#use2) sentences

3. [Reported speech](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect#use3)

4. [Dissatisfaction with the past](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect#use4)

**Use 1: A completed action before another action in the past**

The first use of this tense is to emphasize that one action in the past happened before another action in the past.

 I had finished my homework before I went playing football.

 John had never been to London before we went there last year.

**Use 2: Third conditional**

Use the Past Perfect with third conditional sentences

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 If we had gone by taxi, we wouldn't have been late.

 If Mary had studied harder, she would have passed the exam.

This use is the so-called **hypothetical past**: we are talking about things that **never happened**.

 I wish I **had fixed** my umberella. (but I didn't)

 If only I **had known** the answer to that question. (but I didn't)

**Use 3: Reported speech**

Use the Past Perfect with sentences in reported speech. Mary said she had already seen this film.

 He asked if I had read *Harry Potter*.

**Use 4: Dissatisfaction with the Past**

We often use the Past Perfect to show our dissatisfaction with the past. Such sentences typically start with "I wish ..." or "If only ...".

 I wish I had taken more food. I'm hungry now.

 If only I had taken more food. I'm hungry now.

**The Past Perfect** is also used with expressions such as "as if" and "as though":

 John looked as if he had done something terrible.

 She looked as though she hadn't slept all night.

**Form**

To form a sentence in the Past Perfect, what you need is:

1. The proper conjugation of the **auxiliary verb "to have"** in the past form.

2. The **Past Participle** of your verb.

**1. Auxiliary verb "to have"**

The past form of the auxiliary verb "to have" is "had":

 Mary **had** finished her homework before Mike came home.

**The Past Participle**

The [past participle](http://www.englishtenses.com/page/past_participle) of a verb is a verb form that appears with the [perfect tenses](http://www.englishtenses.com/page/perfect_tenses.html). The past participle can be either[regular](http://www.englishtenses.com/page/regular_verbs) or [irregular](http://www.englishtenses.com/irregular_verbs).

The regular verbs are formed by adding "-ed" to the verb:

Talk – talked, Explain – explained, use- used, deliver – delivered, include – included, achieve- achieved

The formation of the irregular verbs does not follow one rule. Therefore, they should be memorized.

Be – been, become – become, see – seen, go – gone, eat – eaten, grow – grown

**Positive Sentences**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **HAD** | + | **Verb (past participle form)** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  | e.g. *gone, taken, done,* etc. |

Ex: Before I went to the park, I had finished my work.

**Questions**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **HAD** | + | **Subject** | + | **Verb (past participle form)** |
|  | e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. | e.g. *gone, taken, done,* etc. |

Ex: Had she eaten the dinner before she went to the cinema?

**Negative Sentences**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **HADN'T** | + | **Verb (past participle form)** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  | e.g. *gone, taken, done,* etc. |

Ex: If he hadn't made the mistake, he would be happy now. I wish I hadn't done it!

**Past Perfect Continuous**

Basic form

Subject + HAD + BEEN + Verb (continuous form)

Examples:

 The boys had been quarreling for half an hour when we arrived home.

 I had been dating Angelina for 3 years before we got married.

 If it hadn't been raining, we would have gone to the park.

 She told me that she had been working as a teacher for over 40 years.

Usage: to talk about actions or situations that were in progress before some other actions or situations. There are also other uses.

1. [Duration of a past action up to a certain point in the past](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect_continuous#use1)

2. [Showing cause of an action or situation](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect_continuous#use2)

3. [Third conditional sentences](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect_continuous#use3)

4. [Reported speech](http://www.englishtenses.com/tenses/past_perfect_continuous#use4)

**Use 1: Duration of a Past Action**

The main use of the Past Perfect Continuous is to express actions or situations that were in progress before some other actions or situations.

 The boys had been quarreling for half an hour when we arrived home.

 I had been dating Angelina for 3 years before we got married.

**Use 2: Showing Cause**

Use this tense to show cause of an action or situation in the past.

 John was in a detention because he had been misbehaving.

 The road was wet because it had been raining.

 I had to go on a diet because I had been eating too much sugar.

 Jessica got sunburnt because she had been lying in the sun too long.

**Use 3: Third Conditional**

Remember that this tense is also used in [third conditional](http://www.englishtenses.com/page/third_conditional) sentences.

 If it hadn't been raining, we would have gone to the park.

**Use 4: Reported Speech**

This tense also appears in [Reported speech](http://www.englishtenses.com/reported_speech).

 She said she knew Charlie had been lying to her.

**Form**

**Positive Sentences**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **HAD** | + | **BEEN** | + | **Verb (continuous form)** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  |  | e.g. *walking, going, taking,* etc. |

Examples:

I had been running for an hour before I twisted my ankle. It was wet outside: It had been raining.

If I had known it, I wouldn't have bought it.

Mary said she had never been swimming so much in one day.

**Questions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **HAD** | + | **Subject** | + | **BEEN** | + | **Verb (continuous form)** |
|  | e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  | e.g. *walking, going, taking,* etc. |

Examples:

For how many hours had Francis been painting the house when the ladder fell? How long had the player been playing before he scored?

Tidbit

The Past Perfect Continuous, in contrast to the Present Perfect Continuous, never expresses actions that continue up until now.

 He has been playing for two hours. (He is still playing or he has just stopped.)

 He had been playing for two hours when I arrived. (He is *not* playing football now.)

**Negative Sentences**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | + | **HAD + NOT** | + | **BEEN** | + | **Verb (continuous form)** |
| e.g. *he, she, a dog,* etc. |  |  | e.g. *walking, going, taking,* etc. |

Examples:

Mary hadn't been waiting for longer than 10 minutes.

If it hadn't been raining, we would have played football.

If I hadn't been studying all night, I would have problems with this test now. He said he was't tired because he hadn't been working that day.