

## Past perfect simple

had + past participle

Form

statement

I/you/he/she/it/we/they **had ('d)**  
**written ...**

negative

I/you/he/she/it/we/they **had not (hadn't)**  
**written ...**

question

**Had** I/you/he/she/it/we/they  
**written ...?**

Use

Actions and states  
before a moment in  
the past

Example

**I'd finished** my homework  
a few minutes before the  
lesson started.  
Mrs Cross **had been** a  
teacher for twenty years  
before she became a head  
teacher.Finished actions and  
states where the  
important thing is the  
result at a moment in  
the pastWe were happy because  
we'd **all done** our  
homework.

## Helpful hints

The past perfect simple is often used with the following words and phrases:

- by *I'd finished my homework **by** eight o'clock.*
- by the time ***By the time** I got to class, the lesson had started.*
- before *The teacher had checked the answers **before** the lesson.*
- after *I left **after** I'd finished the test.*
- just *Simon had **just** finished the test when the bell rang.*
- when *I left **when** I'd finished the test.*

Watch out!

- Whether we use the past simple or the past perfect simple can change the meaning of a sentence.
  - ✓ The lesson **started** when I arrived. (= I arrived and then the lesson started.)
  - ✓ The lesson **had started** when I arrived. (= The lesson started and then I arrived.)
- Some verbs have irregular past participle forms. See page 182.

## Past perfect continuous

had + been + -ing

Form

statement

I/you/he/she/it/we/they **had ('d)**  
**been writing ...**

negative

I/you/he/she/it/we/they **had not (hadn't)**  
**been writing ...**

question

**Had** I/you/he/she/it/we/they  
**been writing ...?**

Use

Actions continuing  
up to, or stopping  
just before, a  
moment in the past

Example

**We'd been doing** grammar  
exercises for over an hour, so  
we were really bored!  
They had a break because  
they'd **been working** so hard.

## Helpful hints

The past perfect continuous is often used with the following words and phrases:

- for *Tony had been studying **for** hours, so he had a headache.*
- since *She'd been hoping to win the competition **since** the summer.*
- before *We'd been talking about the Internet **before** the lesson started.*
- all day/night/etc *I'd been studying **all day**.*

Watch out!

- The past perfect simple often emphasises the result of an action:
  - ✓ She'd **written** an article for the school newspaper. (= She'd finished it.)
- The past perfect continuous often emphasises the action, and the time spent on the action, rather than the result:
  - ✓ She'd **been writing** an article for the newspaper. (= She'd started, but she hadn't finished it.)

**A** Complete using the correct past perfect simple form of the verbs in brackets.

- 1 By the time I arrived, everyone ..... (leave!)
- 2 Steve ..... (already / see) the film, so he didn't come with us to the cinema.
- 3 Tina ..... (not / finish) doing the housework by seven o'clock, so she called Andrea to tell her she would be late.
- 4 ..... (you / just / speak) to Billy when I rang?
- 5 The car broke down just after ..... (we / set off).
- 6 I didn't eat anything at the party because ..... (I / already / eat) at home.
- 7 ..... (you / hear) about the accident before you saw it on TV?

**B** Choose the sentence (A or B) which means the same as the first sentence.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 We'd had dinner when Wendy arrived.<br/>A Wendy arrived and then we had dinner.<br/>B We had dinner and then Wendy arrived.</li> <li>2 I read the book after I'd seen the film.<br/>A I saw the film and then I read the book.<br/>B I read the book and then I saw the film.</li> <li>3 By the time Dad came home, I'd gone to bed.<br/>A I went to bed before Dad came home.<br/>B I went to bed after Dad came home.</li> <li>4 She didn't go to bed until her mum had come home.<br/>A She went to bed and then her mum came home.<br/>B Her mum came home and then she went to bed.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Mr Banks hadn't arrived at the office by the time I got there.<br/>A I arrived before Mr Banks.<br/>B Mr Banks arrived before me.</li> <li>6 They'd bought the plane tickets before they heard about the cheaper flight.<br/>A They bought the plane tickets and later they heard about the cheaper flight.<br/>B They heard about the cheaper flight and then they bought the plane tickets.</li> <li>7 The girls had tidied the house when the visitors arrived.<br/>A The visitors arrived and later the girls tidied the house.<br/>B The girls tidied the house and then the visitors arrived.</li> </ol> |
|--|---|

**C** Write sentences using the prompts. One of the verbs must be in the past perfect simple.

- 1 we / just / hear / the news / when / you / ring  
.....
- 2 I / already / think of / that / before / you / suggest / it  
.....
- 3 when / I / turn on / the TV / the programme / already / start  
.....
- 4 she / be / hungry / because / she / not / eat / anything / all day  
.....
- 5 by the time / I leave / school / I / decide / to become / a musician  
.....

