

19 Review of the Past Simple, Continuous and Perfect

1 Introduction

Read this true story. It happened some years ago.

*A young man **walked** into a supermarket in Southampton and **put** a few items of food in a basket. He **had chosen** a time when not many people **were shopping** in the store. He **found** a checkout where no one else **was waiting**. When the cashier **had checked** the goods, the man **gave** her a £10 note. When she **opened** the till, the man quickly **snatched** all the money from it and **ran** out of the store before she **realized** what **was happening**. At the time the security guard **was standing** at the other end of the store. When staff **checked** the records in the till, they **found** that the thief **had taken** only £4.37. As he **had left** the £10 note behind, the operation **had cost** him £5.63.*

2 Comparison of tenses

We use the Past Simple to talk about the past (see Unit 8).

*He **snatched** the money and **ran** away.*

The Past Simple is used for the actions in the story, to tell us what happened next.

We use the Past Continuous (see Unit 9) for something around a past time or a past action.

*At the time of the incident, not many people **were shopping** in the store.*

The few customers were in the middle of doing their shopping.

We use the Past Perfect (see Unit 18) for things before a past situation.

*Staff found that the thief **had taken** only £4.37.*

The theft of the money happened before they found out how much.

3 Past Simple and Past Continuous

We often use these two forms together when a shorter action comes in the middle of a longer one (see Unit 10.2).

*I **was waiting** at the checkout when I **noticed** a strange-looking man.*

Seeing the man came in the middle of the wait.

4 Past Simple and Past Perfect

When we use these two forms together, we use the Past Perfect for what happened earlier.

*A man **walked** into a supermarket. He **had chosen** a quiet time.*

The choice of the time came before the arrival in the supermarket.

In this example, one past action followed another.

*He **filled** the basket and **went** to the checkout.*

We can also use either when ... **had done**, or after ... **did/had done**.

*When he **had filled** the basket, he **went** to the checkout.*

*After he **had filled** (OR After he **filled**) the basket, he **went** to the checkout.*

But when one short action comes straight after another, we use the Past Simple for both.

*When she **opened** the till, he **snatched** all the money out of it.*

Note the different meanings.

*When I switched the TV on, the programme **started**. I was just in time.*

*When I switched the TV on, the programme **had started**. I missed the beginning.*

We can use the Past Perfect or the Past Simple with **before** or **until**. There is no difference in meaning.

*The man arrived at the store before it **had opened**/before it **opened**.*

*The chairman didn't speak until he **had heard**/until he **heard** all the arguments.*

Practice

A Past Simple, Continuous and Perfect (1–4)

Look at these sentences and then tick the right answer.

- ▶ David and Tom were talking together when a young woman spoke to them.
Which took more time, a) ☒ what David and Tom said, or b) ☐ what the woman said?
- 1 Mike had put up the tent, but Harriet was still unloading things from the car.
Which finished first, a) ☐ putting up the tent, or b) ☐ unloading?
- 2 Mark went home and switched off the computer.
What did he do first, a) ☐ go home, or b) ☐ switch off the computer?
- 3 When Claire arrived, Henry was walking up and down.
Which started earlier, a) ☐ Claire's arrival, or b) ☐ Henry's walking?
- 4 When Sarah had phoned the office, she drove to the hotel.
Did she phone the office a) ☐ before, or b) ☐ after driving to the hotel?

B Past Simple and Past Perfect (4)

Write the two sentences as one. Use **when** and the Past Perfect in either the first or the second part of the sentence.

- ▶ I took the book back to the library. I read it.
I took the book back to the library when I'd read it.
- ▶ The students did the experiment. They wrote a report on it.
When the students had done the experiment, they wrote a report on it.
- 1 Nick saved enough money. He bought a motorbike.
.....
- 2 Mark put all the dishes away. He dried them.
.....
- 3 I looked both ways. I pulled out into the road.
.....
- 4 The golfers went into the clubhouse. They played the last hole.
.....

C Past Simple, Continuous and Perfect (1–4)

Daniel is telling the story of how he forgot his passport. Put the verbs into the correct form.

- (▶) It happened (it / happen) last August at the airport. A few weeks before, a group of us
 (1) (decide) to go to Greece together for a holiday.
 (2) (we / wait) in the queue at passport control when suddenly
 (3) (I / realize) that (4) (I / forget) my
 passport. (5) (it / be) quite a shock. (6)
 (I / hurry) to a phone and (7) (ring) my parents.
 (8) (they / work) in the garden, but luckily my mother
 (9) (hear) the phone.
 (10) (they / find) the passport and immediately
 (11) (drive) to the airport with it. (12)
 (I / meet) them at the information desk. (13) (we / have) no time to talk,
 but (14) (I / say) goodbye to them earlier that morning.
 (15) (I / run) all the way to the plane. I was just in time. When
 (16) (I / get) there, the passengers (17) (sit)
 in their seats ready for take-off. When (18) (they / see) me, everyone
 (19) (start) clapping.