narrative tenses: simple past, past continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous

narrative tenses

1 We **arrived** at the airport and **checked in**. 3.10
2 We **were having** dinner when the plane hit some turbulence. At nine o'clock most people on the plane **were reading** or **were trying** to sleep.
3 When we arrived at the airport, we suddenly realized that we'd **left** one of the suitcases in the taxi.
4 We'd **been flying** for about two hours when suddenly the captain told us to fasten our seat belts because we were flying into some very bad weather.

1 We use the **simple past** to talk about consecutive actions or situations in the past, i.e., for the main events in a story.

2 We use the **past continuous** (*was / were + verb + -ing*) to describe a longer continuous past action or situation that was in progress when another action happened, or to describe an action or situation that was not complete at a past time.

3 We use the **past perfect** (*had + past participle*) to talk about the "earlier past," i.e., things that happened before the main event(s).

4 We use the **past perfect continuous** (*had been + verb + -ing*) with action verbs (*go, play, watch, etc.*) to talk about longer continuous actions or situations that started before the main events happened and continued up to that point. Nonaction verbs (e.g., *be, have, know, like, etc.*) are not usually used in the past continuous or past perfect continuous.

past perfect simple or continuous?

Lina was crying because she'd **been reading** a very sad book. 3.11
Lina didn't want to see the movie, because she'd already **read** the book.

- The past perfect continuous emphasizes the continuation of an activity. The past perfect simple emphasizes the completion of an activity.

Circle the correct verb form.

Ava and Ryan Miller (got) / *were getting* a nasty surprise when they [1] *had checked in / were checking in* at Calgary International Airport yesterday with their baby, Alec. They [2] *had won / won* three free plane tickets to Mexico in a competition, and they [3] *were looking forward to / had been looking forward to* their trip for months. But, unfortunately, they [4] *had been forgetting / had forgotten* to get a passport for their son, so Alec couldn't fly. Luckily, they [5] *had arrived / were arriving* very early for their flight, so they still had time to do something about it. They [6] *had run / ran* to the police station in the airport to apply for an emergency passport. Ava [7] *was going / went* with Alec to the photo booth, while Ryan [8] *had filled out / was filling out* the forms. The passport was ready in an hour, so they [9] *hurried / were hurrying* to the gate and [10] *got / had got* on the plane just in time.

Put the verb in parentheses in the past perfect simple (*had done*) or continuous (*had been doing*). If you think both are possible, use the continuous form.

His English was very good. He'd been learning it for five years. (learn)

1 I was really fed up because we _____ for hours. (wait)
2 She went to the police to report that someone _____ her bag. (steal)
3 It _____ all morning. The streets were wet, and there were puddles everywhere. (rain)
4 She got to work late because she _____ her phone at home and _____ go back and get it. (leave, have to)
5 I almost didn't recognize Tony at the party. He _____ a lot since I last saw him. (change)
6 The tourists' faces were very red. They _____ in the sun all morning and they _____ any sunscreen. (sit, not put on)
7 I could see from their expressions that my parents _____. (argue)
8 Jamilla had a bandage on her arm because she _____ off her bike that morning. (fall)
9 I was amazed because I _____ such an enormous plane before. (never see)
10 How long _____ you _____ before you realized that you were lost? (walk)

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