

Past Perfect

- 1 We form the Past Perfect with **had** and the past participle of a verb (e.g. started, taken):

| | FULL FORM | SHORT FORM |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| I/You/He/She/It/We/They | had started. | 'd started. |

I had taken it. OR I'd taken it.

They had not started. OR They hadn't started.

- 2 Look at this:

A year ago:

Jenny is flying to Rome. She thinks, 'I have never been on a plane before now.'

Now:

Jenny flew to Rome last year. She had never been on a plane before that.

When we talk about an event or situation in past time we use the Past Simple (e.g. **flew**); if we talk about an event before that time, we use the Past Perfect (e.g. **had been**). Here is another example:

Last Saturday at the cinema:

Mary: We don't need to queue because I've already bought the tickets.

Now, talking about last Saturday:

Mary: We didn't need to queue because I had already bought the tickets.

Note that we can use **never** and **already** before the past participle (e.g. **been**, **bought**).

- 3 If we talk about a series of past events in order, we use the Past Simple:

A: *I saw a beautiful bird in my garden.*

B: *I went to get my camera.*

C: *The bird flew away.*

D: *I returned with my camera.*

past A B C D **now**

We need the Past Perfect to make it clear that one of the events is not in order:

D: *I returned with my camera.*

C: *The bird **had** already flown away.*

(The bird had gone before I returned.)

Also, compare these sentences using when:



Past Simple: *When I returned with my camera, the bird flew away. (It went after I returned.)*



Past Perfect: *When I returned with my camera, the bird **had** flown away. (It went before I returned.)*

- 4 The Past Perfect is used in reported speech:

*'I have suffered from asthma for many years.' She told the doctor that she **had** suffered from asthma for many years.*

(For more on reported speech, see Units 100–102.)

Practice

- A Write sentences about what these people had already done or had never done before. Use the Past Perfect, and **already** or **never**.

- ▶ Last summer Mary won a gold medal for the third time.

She had already won two gold medals before that.

- ▶ Last year Ken visited Scotland for the first time.

He had never visited Scotland before that.

- 1 Last weekend Tom rode a horse for the first time.

He before that.

- 2 Last summer Jeff ran in a marathon for the sixth time.

He before that.

- 3 Last week Susan wrote a poem for the first time.

She before that.

- 4 Last week Ann appeared on TV for the first time.
She before that.
- 5 Last summer Tony played tennis at Wimbledon for the fifth time.
He before that.
- 6 Last year Jean wrote her third novel.
She before that.

B In each case you have two events in the order in which they took place. Write the information in one sentence using the words in brackets ().

- ▶ A: The driver started the car. B: Lady James appeared.
(When Lady James/appear/, the driver/already/start/the car)
When Lady James appeared, the driver had already started the car.
- 1 A: We put the fire out. B: The firemen arrived.
(When the firemen/arrive/, we/already/put/the fire out)
.....
- 2 A: Jim finished the work. B: The manager came back.
(When the manager/come/back, Jim/already/finish/the work)
.....
- 3 A: I went to bed. B: Philip telephoned.
(When Philip/telephone/, I/already/go/to bed)
.....
- 4 A: Alice and Jack had lunch. B: Their children came home.
(When their children/come/home, Alice and Jack/already/have/lunch)
.....
- 5 A: Ian prepared the supper. B: His wife got home from work.
(When his wife/get/home from work, Ian/already/prepare/the supper)
.....
- 6 A: The thieves spent the money. B: The police caught them.
(The thieves/already/spend/the money, when the police/catch/them)
.....

C Use the Past Perfect to complete the sentences.

- ▶ Last summer Pam said, 'I've always wanted to fly in a helicopter.'
Pam said that she *had always wanted to fly in a helicopter.*
- 1 Fred said, 'Jack has just gone out.'
Fred told us that Jack
- 2 Robert said to Jill, 'Have you been to Cambridge?'
Robert asked Jill if she
- 3 When the boys came home, Mrs Brock said, 'I've made some sandwiches.'
Mrs Brock told the boys that she
- 4 'I know your cousin,' said Tom. 'I met her in Amsterdam.'
Tom said he knew my cousin because he
- 5 Bob was talking to Jean, and he said, 'Have you ever been to Japan?'
Bob asked Jean if she