

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).

Circle the correct verb form.



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

- 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.

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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