

Past perfect simple and continuous

GRAMMARZONE

Past perfect simple

- to show that one action finished before, or when, another action happened in the past
*John **had** already **bought** the house before he **got** married.*

Note: If we are talking about two actions, one after the other, we usually use the past simple for both.

*The lesson **finished** and we **went** home.*

- to show that a situation existed before an event in the past

*The king **had been** on the throne for two years when the revolution **started**.*

Note: We often use this form after verbs like **said, told, thought, explained, etc.**

*The general **told** him he **had won** the battle.*

Past perfect continuous

- something that was in progress for a period of time before another thing happened. It did not necessarily finish when the other thing happened.

*It **had been raining** all afternoon when Karen **arrived**.*

- something that was in progress for a period of time which caused another situation to exist
*It **had been snowing**, so the road was very slippery*

Note: We often use a time clause beginning with **for** or **since** with this form.

*We **had been walking** for hours when we saw the town in the distance.*

Grammar File page 170



*'When the fire engine **arrived** the fire **had** already **destroyed** the house.'*

1 Choose the correct form of the verb in *italics* to complete the sentences.

- 1 The phone *had been ringing/rang* for ages before she answered it.
- 2 By the time the storm was over, the river *had flooded/ been flooding* the village.
- 3 The teacher told us that the Romans *had been arriving/arrived* in Britain in 43 AD.
- 4 'Did you ask him if he *had taken/took* his medicine?'
- 5 'Yes. He said he *had just been finishing/finished* the bottle.'
- 6 Tony was surprised that the storm *had not been waking/awoken* him up.
- 7 We were sitting on the steps when the bus *had come/came*.
- 8 The people were very angry because they *had paid/ been paying* such high taxes for years.
- 9 The girls *had been studying/studying* ancient Roman art for two terms.
- 10 When Harriet saw Jill's bedroom she said she *had never seen/been seeing* such a mess.