

Past Perfect: Earlier Past Actions

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: had + past participle, Contractions ('d / hadn't), Irregular past participles, Subject-auxiliary agreement, Chronological sequence, Earlier past actions, Starting points in storytelling, Sentence structure, already, just

1. The Timeline: The "Past of the Past"

The **Past Perfect** is used to make it clear that one action happened **before** another action in the past. It is often called the "past of the past."

- **Action A (First):** I **had finished** my work.
- **Action B (Second):** I **went** home.
- **Combined:** "When I went home, I **had finished** my work."

2. Formation

We form the Past Perfect using the auxiliary verb **had** + the **Past Participle** (V3) of the main verb. The form of *had* does not change for different subjects (I, you, he, she, we, they all use *had*).

Type	Structure	Example
Affirmative (+)	Subject + had + V3	She had left before I arrived.
Negative (-)	Subject + had not + V3	We had not eaten all day.
Question (?)	Had + Subject + V3?	Had you seen this movie before?

Contractions (Short Forms)

- **Affirmative:** I had \rightarrow **I'd**, She had \rightarrow **She'd**, They had \rightarrow **They'd**
- **Negative:** had not \rightarrow **hadn't**

3. Common Time Markers

We often use specific words to emphasize the timing of the events:

- **Already:** Something happened sooner than expected.
 - *Example:* When I arrived, the train **had already left**.
- **Just:** Something happened a very short time before.
 - *Example:* She **had just finished** dinner when the phone rang.
- **Never:** The action had not happened at any time before that moment.
 - *Example:* He **had never been** to France before that trip.
- **By the time:** Used to mark the later deadline/event.
 - *Example:* **By the time** the police arrived, the thief **had escaped**.

Practice: Past Perfect Simple

Instructions: Complete the sentences using the **Past Perfect Simple** form of the verbs in parentheses.

- For **Affirmative** sentences, use had + past participle.
- For **Negative** sentences, use the cue (not/verb).
- For **Questions**, use the cue (subject/verb) and pay attention to word order.

1. When I arrived at the cinema, the movie _____ (already / start).
2. I was very hungry because I _____ (not / eat) anything since breakfast.
3. _____ (they / finish) their homework before they went out to play?
4. She told me that she _____ (never / see) such a beautiful painting before.
5. By the time we got to the station, the train _____ (leave).
6. Why _____ (he / not / call) you before he came to the office?
7. The garden was dead because it _____ (be) dry all summer.
8. _____ (you / meet) him before the party last night?
9. We were late for the plane because we _____ (forget) our passports.
10. She was exhausted because she _____ (not / sleep) well for three nights.
11. The house was quiet when I got home because everyone _____ (go) to bed.
12. Where _____ (she / live) before she moved to London?
13. I didn't recognize him because he _____ (change) his hairstyle.
14. _____ (the team / practice) enough before the match started?
15. I realized that I _____ (not / lock) the front door.

Answer Key

1. **had already started**
2. **had not eaten** (or **hadn't eaten**)
3. **Had they finished**
4. **had never seen**
5. **had left**
6. **had he not called** (or **hadn't he called**)
7. **had been**
8. **Had you met**
9. **had forgotten**
10. **had not slept** (or **hadn't slept**)
11. **had gone**
12. **had she lived**
13. **had changed**
14. **Had the team practiced**
15. **had not locked** (or **hadn't locked**)