

Past Perfect

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Grammar Notes

PAST PERFECT

A. Introduction

The past perfect is used for two actions that occurred at different times in the past. In a past perfect sentence, the first past action (further in the past) uses the *past perfect*, and the second past action (more recent) uses the *simple past*.

Past Perfect	
Diagram	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>6:00 pm</p> <p>1</p> <p>X</p> <p>She ate dinner.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>8:00 pm</p> <p>2</p> <p>X</p> <p>I called her.</p> </div> </div> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She had eaten dinner by the time I called her. • By the time I called her, she had eaten dinner. </div>
Form	had + past participle
Function	one past action happened before another past action
Time Markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by the time • when • before <p>(Note that other time markers such as <i>yesterday</i>, <i>last</i>, <i>ago</i>, <i>already</i>, <i>just</i>, <i>still</i>, and <i>yet</i> are often additionally used.)</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone had left by the time I locked up. • I had already sent email about the missing stop sign before they fixed it. • By the time my girlfriend woke up, the movie had ended. • Had you already heard the news when I texted you? • They couldn't hand in their group project because one member hadn't finished her section yet.

Grammar Notes cont.

B. Notes

Note #1

When the dependent (time) clause begins the sentence, we usually use a comma. We don't need a comma when the independent clause begins the sentence. There is no change in meaning.

- **By the time I graduated**, I had made many new business contacts.
- I had made many new business contacts **by the time I graduated**.

Note #2

Instead of a dependent clause, we can use an adverb phrase of time (note that a phrase has no subject or past verb). Examples of typical phrases include *by July 2010*, *by 6:00 last night*, *by the weekend*, etc.

- **By August 2017**, they had completed the additions to the building.
- She had already left the office **by 2:00 pm yesterday**.

Note #3

The past perfect action can be repeated, or there could be multiple actions before the final one.

- **I had texted my son five times** before he got back to me.
- **He had cleaned his room, made dinner, and done his homework** by the time I got home.

Note #4

The past perfect is not as common as the simple past. In fact, we can use the simple past instead of the past perfect, especially in informal situations (mostly when a time marker other than "by the time" is used). There is no change in meaning.

- I **had shut down** my computer before I left the house.
- I **shut down** my computer before I left the house. (*more common*)

Bonus:

Can you figure out the meaning of this sentence?

All the faith he had had had had no effect on the outcome of his life.

Exercise 1

MATCHING

Match the first part of the sentence on the left with the correct ending on the right.

- | | | |
|----------|--|--|
| <u>g</u> | 1. Her plants died because... | a) she had lost her doll. |
| _____ | 2. He couldn't buy the new computer because... | b) she had left her purse at home. |
| _____ | 3. The kids couldn't fall asleep last night because... | c) she had already left the office. |
| _____ | 4. The little girl was crying because... | d) he hadn't studied at all. |
| _____ | 5. I didn't have to buy groceries because... | e) he had spent all his money. |
| _____ | 6. He failed his exam because... | f) she had forgotten to set the alarm. |
| _____ | 7. The man bought a new camera because... | g) she hadn't watered them. |
| _____ | 8. My sister couldn't pay for lunch because... | h) they had watched a scary movie. |
| _____ | 9. The woman slept late because... | i) I had gone shopping the day before. |
| _____ | 10. I couldn't speak to the boss because... | j) he had lost his old one. |

Exercise 2

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Write the past perfect tense of the verbs below the blanks.

Ex. The teacher had already corrected all the students' tests.
(correct)

1. When I got to the house, Mary wasn't there. She _____ already _____ .
(leave)
2. I didn't recognize my old classmate because she _____ so much.
(change)
3. We missed the beginning of the movie. When we got to the theatre, it _____ already _____ .
(start)
4. I was very nervous for my first plane trip because I _____ never _____ before.
(fly)
5. I couldn't eat much dinner last night because I _____ such a big lunch.
(have)
6. I couldn't make dinner yesterday. When I got to the supermarket, it _____ already _____ .
(close)
7. Last week, our teacher gave back the essays we _____ the week before.
(write)
8. The house was quiet when he got home. Everyone _____ to bed several hours earlier.
(go)
9. They got to school late yesterday. The bell _____ already _____ .
(ring)
10. Aisha couldn't come to my house last night because she _____ already _____ other plans.
(make)
11. We couldn't find the house. It was clear that he _____ us the wrong address.
(give)
12. Annie didn't want to come to the movie with us because she _____ it the week before.
(see)
13. By the time the police arrived at the bank, the robber _____ already _____ .
(escape)
14. I couldn't get into my house last night because I _____ my key.
(forget)
15. They _____ just _____ at the resort when they heard about the incoming hurricane.
(arrive)

Exercise 3

BY THE TIME

Use the prompts to make a past perfect sentence with “by the time” and “already.”

Ex. I missed my plane. (airport / plane take off)

By the time I got to the airport, the plane had already taken off.

1. I missed the show. (theatre / movie start)

2. I couldn't get my prescription. (drugstore / close)

3. I couldn't say goodbye to my friends. (call their house / they leave)

4. I didn't get the job. (I apply / they hire someone else)

5. We couldn't buy the house. (we see / someone else make an offer)

6. The house was destroyed. (the firemen arrive / house burn down)

7. I didn't get to taste her chocolate cake. (I arrive / her children eat whole cake)

8. I didn't see her when she was sick. (I go hospital / she go home)

9. I didn't see the game. (I turn on TV / game finish)

10. I missed my daughter's performance. (I arrive concert / my daughter finish her song)

Exercise 5

PAIR WORK

A. Speaking

Fill in the schedule with things you did yesterday. Then, with a partner, take turns asking and answering past perfect questions with *already* and *yet*.

Example:

- A:** What had you already done by 3:00 pm yesterday?
B: I had already gone for a jog by 3:00 pm yesterday. By 7:00 pm yesterday, what hadn't you done yet?
A: By 7:00 pm yesterday, I hadn't finished my homework yet.

Schedule	
7:00 am	
9:00 am	
11:00 am	
12:00 pm	
1:00 pm	
3:00 pm	
5:00 pm	
7:00 pm	
9:00 pm	
11:00 pm	

Exercise 5 cont.

B. Writing

Write your partner's answers in the spaces below using the past perfect tense.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Exercise 6

WRITING

Write a few paragraphs on the goals you have and haven't accomplished in your life so far. Use the past perfect tense as often as possible.

Example:

When I was young, I wanted to be a journalist. By the time I was 12 years old, I had already had a paper route for two years. By my thirteenth birthday, I had read countless newspaper articles, but I hadn't written any stories of my own yet...

Exercise 7

REVIEW

Complete the following sentences using the correct form and tense of the verb provided. Use the past perfect, present perfect, or simple past tense.

Ex. Vicky didn't get to class on time yesterday.
(get)

By the time she arrived, the class had started.
(arrive) (start)

1. I was disappointed when I _____ at the party last night,
(arrive)
because most of my friends _____ already _____ home.
(go)
2. I _____ never _____ to France, but I would love to go.
(be)
3. I _____ some friends to come for dinner last night,
(invite)
but they couldn't come because they _____ already _____ other plans.
(make)
4. It is still snowing. It _____ to snow last night and it _____ yet.
(start) (not, stop)
5. I _____ to a concert last night.
(go)
I _____ it so much because _____ to a concert for several years.
(enjoy) (not, go)
6. I _____ home quite late last night. My children _____ already _____ asleep.
(get) (fall)
7. I know the new neighbours. I _____ them last week.
(meet)
8. Last night, I _____ the evening with my friends.
(spend)
I wanted to go bowling because I _____ never _____ bowling before.
(go)
9. Dalia is still sick. She _____ a bad cold for over a week.
(have)
10. Eduardo wants to buy a new car. He _____ this one for 12 years.
(own)