

Past Perfect Simple & Continuous

Grammar – past perfect simple (had + p/p)

Affirmative: I had done / You had done / He/she/it had done / We had done / You had done (plural) / They had done

Negative: I had not done / You had not done / He/she/it had not done / We had not done / You had not done / They had not done

Question: Had I done? / Had you done? / Had he/she/it done? / Had we done? / Had you done? / Had they done?

We use the past perfect simple to talk about what happened before a point in the past. It looks back from a point in the past to further in the past.

- I hadn't known the bad news when I spoke to him.
- I checked with the supplier and they still hadn't received the contract.
- She had already told him before I got a chance to give him my version.
- The company has started the year well but was badly hit by the postal strike.

The past perfect simple is often used when we report what people had said/thought/believed.

- He told me they had already paid the bill.
- He said he believed that John had moved to Italy.
- I thought we had already decided on a name for this product.

Grammar – past perfect continuous (had + been + ing)

Affirmative: I had been doing / You had been doing / He/she/it had been doing / We had been doing / You had been doing (pl.) / They had been doing

Negative: I had not been doing / You had not been doing / He/she/it had not been doing / We had not been doing / You had not been doing / They had not been doing

Question: Had I been doing? / Had you been doing? / Had he/she/it been doing? / Had we been doing? / Had you been doing? / Had they been doing?

We use the past perfect continuous to look back at a situation in progress.

- It was a good time to invest. Inflation had been falling for several months.
- Before I changed jobs, I had been working on a plan to reduce production costs.
- We had been thinking about buying a new house but then we decided to stay here.

We use it to say what had been happening before something else happened.

- It had been snowing for a while before we left.
- We had been playing tennis for only a few minutes when it started raining.
- He was out of breath when he arrived because he had been running.

We use it when reporting things said in the past.

- She said she had been trying to call me all day.
- They said they had been shopping.

I told you I had been looking for some new clothes.

Past perfect simple & continuous Exercise 1

(Intermediate level)

Put the verbs in brackets into their correct forms.

1. After I _____ the letter, I _____ that I _____ the wrong address on it. **(post, realise, write)**
2. John asked me where I _____ the day before. **(be)**
3. At this time yesterday, we _____ for 6 km. **(already walk)**
4. When I _____ through the streets of Madrid, I _____ about the magnificent time I _____ there as a student. **(walk, think, spend)**
5. It was the first time that she _____ me to dinner. **(invite)**
6. As soon as the maid _____ scrubbing the kitchen floor, she _____ working in the garden. **(finish, start)**
7. We started to worry about Jimmy because we _____ him all afternoon. **(call)**
8. They _____ their way out of town before the sun _____. **(already make, rise)**
9. We _____ for two hours when we finally got to our hotel. **(drive)**
10. When I _____ home, I saw that the children _____. **(arrive, leave)**
11. While I _____ in the garden it _____ me that I _____ off the oven. **(work, strike, not turn)**
12. I _____ my best friend to the party, but he couldn't come because he _____ other plans. **(invite, already make)**
13. I _____ out of the window because I _____ I _____ some noises. **(look, think, hear)**
14. We _____ TV when we saw that a devastating earthquake _____ California. **(watch, hit)**
15. The police told me that someone _____ into our neighbour's house. **(break)**
16. When I finally _____ at the airport, he told me that he _____ for half an hour. **(arrive, wait)**

Adapted from: www.english-grammar.at

Past perfect simple & continuous Exercise 2

(Advanced level)

Put the verbs in brackets into their correct forms.

1. We were all happy because we _____ in our homework in time. (HAND)
2. Mrs Shilton _____ a primary school teacher for twenty years before she became headmaster of the school. (BE)
3. When we got there, we saw that they _____ for over 20 minutes. (REST)
4. We _____ dance moves for over two hours, so you can imagine we were very tired. (PRACTICE)
5. The film _____ when we finally got to the cinema. (ALREADY START)
6. By the time I _____ to school the lesson had already started. (GET)
7. I _____ up for a few minutes when the doorbell rang and our friends arrived. (ONLY WASH)
8. He _____ about the accident before he saw it on TV. (HEAR)
9. I _____ the office after I had finished writing my last email. (LEAVE)
10. The car _____ down shortly after we had got on the motorway. (BREAK)
11. We _____ for an hour when we finally arrived at the remote village. (WALK)
12. I saw the film after I _____ the book. (READ)
13. I had already thought of that before you _____ it up. (BRING)
14. She was so tired because she _____ football the whole afternoon. (PLAY)
15. As soon as the girls had cleaned the house the visitors _____. (ARRIVE)
16. By the time I was 16 I _____ to become a scientist. (ALREADY DECIDE)
17. Suddenly I realised that I _____ at the wrong person. He was absolutely innocent. (SHOUT)
18. I _____ from my job because I had received an offer from another company. (RESIGN)
19. The teacher gave us a break because we _____ on the project for several hours. (WORK)
20. After dad had finished mowing the lawn, he _____ repairing the car. (START)

Adapted from: www.english-grammar.at

Answers Exercise 1

1. After I **had posted** the letter, I **realised** that I **had written** the wrong address on it
2. John asked me where I **had been** the day before.
3. At this time yesterday, we **had already been walking** for 6 km
4. When I **was walking** through the streets of Madrid, I **thought** about the magnificent time I **had spent** there as a student.
5. It was the first time that she **had invited** me to dinner.
6. As soon as the maid **had finished** scrubbing the kitchen floor, she **started** working in the garden.
7. We started to worry about Jimmy because we **had been calling** him all afternoon.
8. They **had already made** their way out of town before the sun **rose**.
9. We **had been driving** for two hours when we finally got to our hotel.
10. When I **arrived** home, I saw that the children **had already left**.
11. While I **was working** in the garden it **struck** me that I **hadn't turned** off the oven.
12. I **invited** my best friend to the party, but he couldn't come because he **had already made** other plans.
13. I **looked** out of the window because I **thought I had heard** some noises.
14. We **were watching** TV when we saw that a devastating earthquake **had hit** California.
15. The police told me that someone **had broken** into our neighbour's house.
16. When I **finally** arrived at the airport, he told me that he **had been waiting** for half an hour.

Answer Key Exercise 2

1. We were all happy because we **had handed** in our homework in time. (HAND)
2. Mrs Shilton **had been** a primary school teacher for twenty years before she became headmaster of the school. (BE)
3. When we got there, we saw that they **had been resting** for over 20 minutes. (REST)
4. We **had been practicing** dance moves for over two hours, so you can imagine we were very tired. (PRACTICE)
5. The film **had already started** when we finally got to the cinema. (ALREADY START)
6. By the time I **got** to school the lesson had already started. (GET)
7. I **had only been washing** up for a few minutes when the doorbell rang and our friends arrived. (ONLY WASH)
8. He **had heard** about the accident before he saw it on TV. (HEAR)
9. I **left** the office after I had finished writing my last email. (LEAVE)
10. The car **broke** down shortly after we had got on the motorway. (BREAK)
11. We **had been walking** for an hour when we finally arrived at the remote village. (WALK)
12. I saw the film after I **had read** the book. (READ)
13. I had already thought of that before you **brought** it up. (BRING)
14. She was so tired because she **had been playing** football the whole afternoon. (PLAY)
15. As soon as the girls had cleaned the house the visitors **arrived**. (ARRIVE)
16. By the time I was 16 I had **already decided** to become a scientist. (ALREADY DECIDE)
17. Suddenly I realised that I **had been shouting** at the wrong person. He was absolutely innocent. (SHOUT)
18. I **resigned** from my job because I had received an offer from another company. (RESIGN)
19. The teacher gave us a break because we **had been working** on the project for several hours. (WORK)
20. After dad had finished mowing the lawn, he **started** repairing the car. (START)