

Past Perfect Exercises

Level: B1, B2

How the past perfect works

The past perfect (had + past participle) shows that one past action happened before another past action — it is the 'past of the past'.

Form: had + past participle: I had finished, she had gone

Use: the earlier of two past actions: When I arrived, the film had started.

With before/after: She had left before I called. / After he had eaten, he slept.

Reported thoughts: I realised I had forgotten my keys.

Signal words: already, just, never...before, by the time, after, before, when

Exercise 1: Choose the correct form

Select the correct option to complete each sentence.

- When I turned on the TV, the match ____.
a) already finished b) had already finished c) has already finished
- She couldn't pay because she ____ her wallet at home.
a) had left b) left c) has left
- By the time we arrived, most guests ____ home.
a) went b) have gone c) had gone
- I ____ that restaurant before, so I knew the menu well.
a) had visited b) visited c) have visited
- After he ____ the report, he sent it to his boss.
a) had checked b) has checked c) checks

Exercise 2: Complete the sentences

Type the past perfect form of the verb in brackets (had + past participle).

- The garden was beautiful because it ____ all night. (rain)
- I recognised her immediately — we ____ at a conference years earlier. (meet)
- He failed the test because he ____ at all. (not study)
- By midnight, everyone ____ the party. (leave)
- She was nervous because she ____ a plane before. (never take)

Exercise 3: Put the words in order

Click the words in the correct order to build the sentence.

11. Put the words in the correct order: **had / the film / when / started / we arrived**

12. Put the words in the correct order: **never / she / sushi / had / eaten / before that day**

13. Put the words in the correct order: **he / after / had finished / went home / work / he**

14. Put the words in the correct order: **had / by 2010 / they / the bridge / built**

Exercise 4: True or false?

Decide if each statement about the past perfect is true or false.

15. The past perfect describes the earlier of two past actions. True / False

16. "I had went home early" is correct. True / False

17. With 'after' + past perfect, the past simple describes the later action. True / False

18. You must always use the past perfect when telling a story about the past. True / False

Answer key

Exercise 1: Choose the correct form

1. b) had already finished
2. a) had left
3. c) had gone
4. a) had visited
5. a) had checked

Exercise 2: Complete the sentences

6. had rained
7. had met
8. hadn't studied / had not studied
9. had left
10. had never taken

Exercise 3: Put the words in order

11. the film had started when we arrived
12. she had never eaten sushi before that day
13. after he had finished work he went home
14. by 2010 they had built the bridge

Exercise 4: True or false?

15. True
16. False
17. True
18. False