

PAST SIMPLE/CONTINUOUS/PERFECT

We use specific tenses for narratives. When we tell a story, we use these tenses. The tense we use depends on the time of the event.

Past Simple

Past Continuous

Past Perfect

When we talk about past events we use **Past Simple**.

I **started** learning English!



Past Simple

When the event is not finished at the time, we use **Past Continuous**.

I was learning English!



Past Continuous

When the event happens
before another event, we
use **Past Perfect**.

I had learned English
before I learned German!



Past Perfect

We use **when** to emphasize the sequence in events.

I **learned** about different cultures **when I started** university.



First, you started university.
Then, you learned about different cultures.



When

We can use **when** with almost any tense. The sequence of events change.

I **had drunk** all the water at home, when they **arrived**.



I **was running** home, when you **were drinking** the water.



First I drank the water, then you came.

The actions happened at the same time.

We also use **after/before** to denote the sequence of events.

Had you known who they were, **before** they called us?



No. I learned **after** you told me.



After/before

We have special adverbs for past perfect.

I had done the cleaning **by the time** you arrived.



I didn't know that **until** you had told me.



By the time/Until

Exercises

1. It was their first flight. They _____ (fly) before.
2. You didn't know it until I _____ (tell) you, right?
3. Paul wasn't at the party when I arrived. He _____ (go) home.
4. I felt very tired when I got home, so I _____ (go) straight to bed.
5. The house was very quiet when I got home. Everybody _____ (go) to bed.

***Complete the story using the past simple, past perfect, or past continuous of the verbs in brackets.**

It _____ (be) Tuesday evening and I _____ (get) ready to go to bed when the phone _____ (ring). To my surprise it _____ (be) my friend Peter. He _____ (call) from his mobile and he was very annoyed because he _____ (lose) his keys and he _____ (cannot) get into his flat. He _____ (think) he _____ (leave) them at work but now it was midnight and the office was closed so he _____ (cannot) get in to check. Luckily I had the keys to his flat because a month before he _____ (give) me a spare set so that I could look after his cat while he was on holiday. When he finally _____ (arrive) to pick them up, it was three o'clock in the morning, and I _____ (lie) on the sofa fast asleep.

Answer Key

1. It was their first flight. They **hadn't flown** (fly) before.
2. You didn't know it until I **had told** (tell) you, right?
3. Paul wasn't at the party when I arrived. He **had gone** (go) home.
4. I felt very tired when I got home, so I **went** (go) straight to bed.
5. The house was very quiet when I got home. Everybody **had gone** (go) to bed.

***Complete the story using the past simple, past perfect, or past continuous of the verbs in brackets.**

It **was** (be) Tuesday evening and I **was getting** (get) ready to go to bed when the phone **rang** (ring). To my surprise it **was** (be) my friend Peter. He **was calling** (call) from his mobile and he was very annoyed because he **had lost** (lose) his keys and he **couldn't** (cannot) get into his flat. He **thought** (think) he **had left** (leave) them at work but now it was midnight and the office was closed so he **couldn't** (cannot) get in to check. Luckily I had the keys to his flat because a month before he **had given** (give) me a spare set so that I could look after his cat while he was on holiday. When he finally **arrived** (arrive) to pick them up, it was three o'clock in the morning, and I **was lying** (lie) on the sofa fast asleep.