

B2 - Looking back

A man with dark hair and a white t-shirt is shown from the waist up, looking to his left with a wide-eyed, open-mouthed expression of surprise or shock. His right arm is extended forward, and his left hand is raised near his head. The background is a solid, bright blue.

Explore the past perfect simple with contrast to the past simple

Warm-up questions

1. Have you ever arrived somewhere and realised you had forgotten something important?
2. Have you ever made a decision and then later thought “I should have done something else”?
3. What’s something you wish you had done differently?



Past simple VS. past perfect simple

Past simple:

Structure: Subject + past verb (regular / irregular)

Use: To talk about completed actions in the past.

Examples:

1. *She left the office at 6 p.m.*
2. *They watched the film last night.*
3. *I lost my keys yesterday.*

Past perfect simple:

Structure: Subject + had + past participle

Use: To show one past action happened before another past action.

Examples:

1. She had left before I arrived.
2. They had finished dinner when we called.
3. I had never seen such a strange movie before.

Before It Was Too Late

Alex stood in front of the burned-down house, still shaking. Just hours before, he had forgotten his phone at the office. When he returned to get it, he smelled smoke from the street.

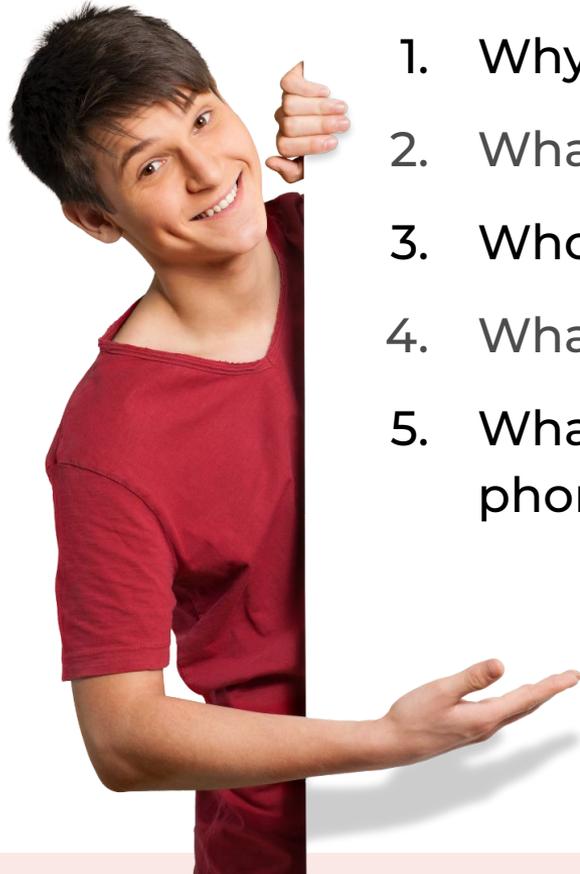
By the time he reached the house, the fire had already spread to the roof. His neighbour had called the fire department, but they hadn't arrived yet.

Thankfully, no one was home. His roommate had left for work, and Alex had been lucky. If he hadn't forgotten his phone, he would never have come back in time to notice the fire.

Later, he learned the fire had started in the kitchen — someone had left the stove on.



Comprehension questions



1. Why did Alex return home?
2. What had already happened when he got back?
3. Who had left the stove on?
4. What had the neighbour done?
5. What might have happened if Alex didn't forget his phone?

Sentence reordering

Instructions: Reorder the words to form correct past perfect or past simple sentences.

1. (already / left / she / when / I / had / arrived)
2. (we / never / seen / had / that / before / actor)
3. (they / dinner / had / finished / after / went / out / they)
4. (before / I / started / coffee / work / made / had / my)
5. (he / his / lost / passport / realised / had / he / that)

Tense comparison

Affirmative sentences		
Tense	Structure	Example
Past simple	Subject + past verb	She left the party early.
Past perfect simple	Subject + had + past participle	She had left before the movie ended.
Negative sentences		
Past simple	Subject + did not (didn't) + base verb	He didn't see the message.
Past perfect simple	Subject + had not (hadn't) + past participle	He hadn't seen the message before.
Yes/No questions		
Past simple	Did + subject + base verb	Did she call you yesterday?
Past perfect simple	Had + subject + past participle	Has she called you before you left?
Wh - questions		
Past simple	Wh- + did + subject + base verb	When did he arrive?
Past perfect simple	Wh- + had + subject + past participle	Why had he left so early?



HearSay Learn audio activities

This next section of activities is based on a **HearSay Learn audio track**. These slides include the **HearSay Learn logo** in the top-right corner so you can easily identify them.

Want to Listen to the Audio?

To access the track:

- Click the shareable link on the slide, or
- Scan the QR code using your mobile phone.

This will open the **HearSay Learn WhatsApp** application, where you can listen to the audio as many times as you like.

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“Volunteering my way up”



[Click here to listen to the audio conversation using the past perfect simple tense aspect](#) (or scan the QR code, above)

*** *British accent*



Gap-fill activity (*HearSay Learn audio*)

Complete the sentences using the past perfect simple form of the verbs in brackets.

1. Alice said the volunteering placement she _____ (do) five years earlier had completely changed her trajectory.
2. Ben asked how the experience _____ (shape) her career path.
3. Alice explained she _____ already _____ (have) a degree before she joined the charity.
4. She added that the fieldwork experience she _____ (gain) had given her the skills the firm wanted.
5. Ben wanted to know which project she _____ (finish) that had clinched the job.
6. Alice said the firm _____ (struggle) to find candidates with real on-the-ground experience before hiring her.



Multiple-choice (*HearSay Learn audio*)

Choose the correct answers (a, b, or c).

1. **According to Alice, the volunteering placement changed her career because she had...**
 - a. learned completely new academic theories
 - b. gained specific fieldwork experience before applying
 - c. met Ben during the project
2. **What had Ben originally thought about Alice's volunteering?**
 - a. That she was doing it to gain skills
 - b. That she was killing time
 - c. That she was required to do it for her degree
3. **Which project had Alice completed that helped her secure the job?**
 - a. A community-mapping initiative
 - b. A long-term fundraising campaign
 - c. A digital marketing strategy
4. **Why had the consulting firm struggled to hire people?**
 - a. They wanted candidates who had actually worked on the ground
 - b. They offered low salaries for entry-level jobs
 - c. They only recruited graduates from top universities



Comprehension (*HearSay Learn audio*)

1. Why does Alice say the volunteering placement changed her trajectory?
2. What had Alice already achieved academically before she began volunteering?
3. What experience had she gained that the consulting firm found valuable?
4. Which specific project does Alice mention, and why was it important?
5. Why had the consulting firm previously struggled to find suitable candidates?
6. How does Ben summarise the impact volunteering had on Alice's career?



Affirmative sentences

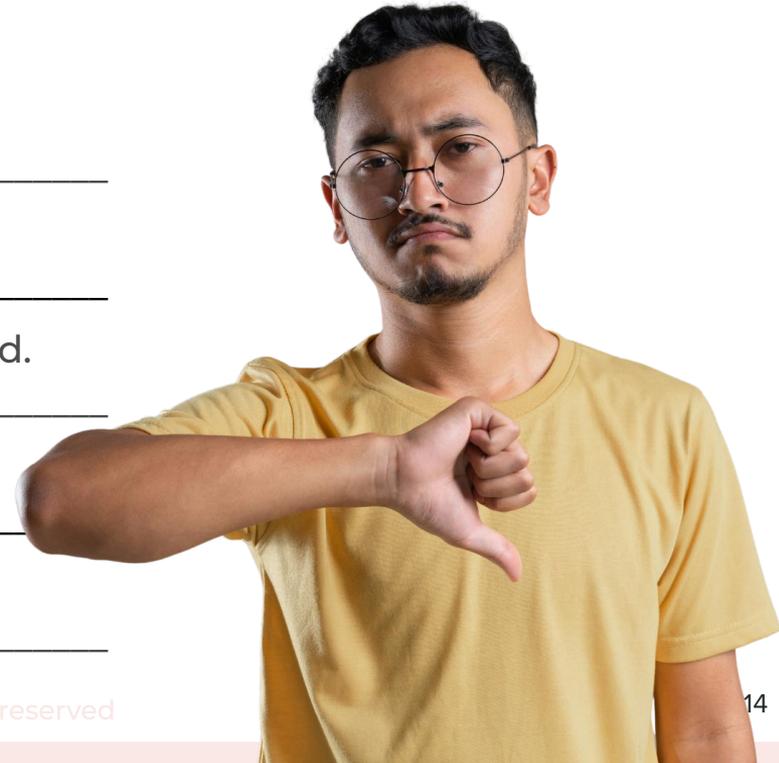
Instructions: Fill in the blanks using the correct form of the past simple or past perfect simple verb provided in the brackets.

1. When I arrived at the cinema, the movie already _____. (start)
2. We _____ dinner at 7 p.m. last night. (eat)
3. She _____ the email before I could reply. (read)
4. They _____ the documents yesterday morning. (send)
5. He was upset because he _____ his phone. (lose)

Negative sentences

Instructions: Rewrite the sentences in the negative form using the correct tense.

1. I had packed my suitcase.
→ _____
2. She saw the announcement online.
→ _____
3. We had visited the museum before the tour started.
→ _____
4. They met the actor after the screening.
→ _____
5. He had finished his report.
→ _____



Yes/No questions – transform the sentences

Instructions: Turn these statements into yes/no questions in the correct tense.

1. She had written the article.

→ _____

2. They watched the interview.

→ _____

3. He had completed the edits.

→ _____

4. You emailed the producer.

→ _____

5. They had left before the press arrived.

→ _____



Wh- questions – complete the questions

Instructions: Use the question word + correct tense structure to complete the question.

1. _____ had you spoken to before the meeting?
2. _____ did they arrive at the studio?
3. _____ had he done before the lights went out?
4. _____ did she say in the interview?
5. _____ had the director travelled before filming started?



Speaking task – tell the story backwards

Instructions: In pairs or small groups, tell a story backward. Start with the final result, and work your way to what happened before using the past perfect simple.

Example prompt:

“The train left without me.” → What had happened before that? Had you set an alarm? Had you packed the night before?

Each group presents a 3–4 line mini-story using both past simple and past perfect simple.



Thank you for your support.

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