

UNIT 3

▶ Narrative tenses

Past Simple and Present Perfect

See the introduction to the perfect aspect and the simple aspect on p141. The Past Simple differs from all three uses of the Present Perfect.

- 1 The Past Simple refers to **finished past**.

Shakespeare wrote plays. (He's dead.)

I've written short stories. (I'm alive.)

- 2 There is **no present result**.

I hurt my back. (But it's better now.)

I've hurt my back. (And it hurts now.)

- 3 It refers to **definite past**.

<i>I saw him</i>		<i>last night.</i>
		<i>two weeks ago.</i>
		<i>on Monday.</i>
		<i>at 8.00.</i>

Compare this with the indefinite adverbials found with the Present Perfect.

<i>I've seen him</i>		<i>recently.</i>
		<i>before.</i>

<i>I haven't seen him</i>		<i>since January.</i>
		<i>yet.</i>
		<i>for months.</i>

<i>I've</i>		<i>never</i>		<i>seen him.</i>
		<i>just</i>		

Note

Even when there is no past time adverbial, we can 'build' a past time in our head.

Did you have a good journey? (The journey's over. You're here now.)

Thank you for supper. It was lovely. (The meal is finished.)

Where did you buy that shirt? (when you were out shopping the other day.)

Past Simple

The Past Simple is used:

- 1 to express a finished action in the past.
Columbus discovered America in 1492.
- 2 to express actions which follow each other in a story.
I heard voices coming from downstairs, so I put on my dressing-gown and went to investigate.
- 3 to express a past state or habit.
When I was a child, we lived in a small house by the sea. Every day I walked for miles on the beach.

This use is often expressed with *used to*.

We used to live ...

I used to walk ...

See Unit 9 for more information on *used to*.

See Unit 11 for information on the Past Simple used for hypothesis.

Past Continuous

See the introduction to the continuous aspect on p141.

The Past Continuous is used:

- 1 to express an activity in progress before and probably after a time in the past.
I phoned at 4.00, but there was no reply. What were you doing?
- 2 to describe a past situation or activity.
The cottage was looking so cosy. A fire was burning in the grate, music was playing, and from the kitchen were coming the most delicious smells.
- 3 to express an interrupted past activity.
I was having a bath when the phone rang.
- 4 to express an incomplete activity in the past.
I was reading a book during the flight. (But I didn't finish it.)
I watched a film during the flight. (the whole film)
- 5 to express an activity that was in progress at every moment during a period of time.
I was working all day yesterday.
They were fighting for the whole of the holiday.

Notes

- The Past Simple expresses past actions as simple, complete facts. The Past Continuous gives past activities time and duration.

'What did you do last night?'

'I stayed at home and watched the football.'

'I phoned you last night, but there was no reply.'

'Oh, I was watching the football and I didn't hear the phone. Sorry.'

- Notice how the questions in the Past Continuous and Past Simple refer to different times.

When we arrived, Jan was ironing. She stopped ironing and made some coffee.

What was she doing when we arrived? She was ironing.

What did she do when we arrived? She made some coffee.

Past Perfect

See the introduction to the perfect aspect and the continuous aspect on p141.

The Past Perfect is used to look back to a time in the past and refer to an action that happened before then.

She was crying because her grandmother had died.

I arrived to pick up Dave, but he had already left.

Keith was fed up. He'd been looking for a job for months, but he'd found nothing.

Notes

- The continuous refers to longer actions or repeated activities. The simple refers to shorter, complete facts.
He'd lost his job and his flatmate had thrown him out. Since then he'd been sleeping rough, and he hadn't been eating properly.
- The Past Perfect can refer to definite as well as indefinite time.
I knew his face immediately. I'd first met him in October 1993. (= definite)
I recognized her face. I'd seen her somewhere before. (= indefinite)

Past Perfect and Past Simple

- 1 Verbs in the Past Simple tell a story in chronological order.
John worked hard all day to prepare for the dinner. Everyone had a good time. Even the food was all right. Unfortunately, Andy upset Peter, so Peter left early. Pat came looking for Peter, but he wasn't there. It was a great evening. John sat and looked at all the mess. He felt tired. It was time for bed.
- 2 By using the Past Perfect, the speaker or writer can tell a story in a different order.
John sat and looked at all the mess. It had been a great evening, and everyone had had a good time. Even the food had been all right. Unfortunately, Andy upset Peter, so Peter left early. Pat came looking for Peter, but he'd already gone. John felt tired. He'd been working all day to prepare for the dinner. It was time for bed.

Note

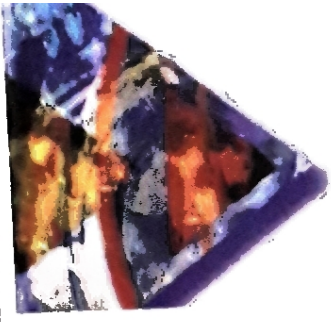
For reasons of style, it is not necessary to have every verb in the Past Perfect.

... Andy upset Peter ... Peter left ...

Once the time of 'past in the past' has been established, the Past Simple can be used as long as there is no ambiguity.

Time clauses

- 1 We can use time conjunctions to talk about two actions that happen one after the other. Usually the Past Perfect is not necessary in these cases, although it can be used.
After I'd had/had a bath, I went to bed.
As soon as the guests left/had left, I started tidying up.
I sat outside until the sun had gone/went down.
 - 2 The Past Perfect can help to make the first action seem separate, independent of the second, or completed before the second action started.
When I had read the paper, I threw it away.
We stayed up until all the guests had gone.
 - 3 Two verbs in the Past Simple can suggest that the first action led into the other, or that one caused the other to happen.
When I heard the news, I burst out crying.
As soon as the alarm went off, I got up.
 - 4 The Past Perfect is more common with *when* because it is ambiguous. The other conjunctions are more specific, so the Past Perfect is not so essential.
As soon as all the guests left, I tidied the house.
Before I met you, I didn't know the meaning of kindness.
When I opened the door, the cat jumped out.
When I'd opened the mail, I made another cup of tea.
- See Unit 11 for information on the Past Perfect used for hypothesis.



3

What a story!

TEST YOUR GRAMMAR

Read the story. Put the events into chronological order. What happened first? What happened last?

Burglar arrested

A COUPLE came home at midnight to find their house had been burgled. Bob and Janet Gilbreath had left their house at six o'clock to go to the theatre. When they got home, the back door had been smashed, and money and jewellery stolen. A neighbour said that she had heard a loud noise at about eight o'clock. Mr and Mrs Gilbreath, who moved to the house five years ago, told police that they had seen a man who had been acting suspiciously for several days before the robbery, and were able to give a description. A man answering the description was later arrested.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Narrative tenses

1 Look at the newspaper headlines. What do you think is the whole story?

2 What would you like to know? Write some more questions.

Did he mean to fall over?

Where was she climbing?

How did he manage to hack into their systems?

3 **T 31** Listen to three conversations about the stories. Which of your questions were answered?

4 Here are the answers to some questions. What are the questions?

1 Just ordinary clothes.

2 For a dare.

3 Three hours.

4 In a shelter.

5 His own software program.

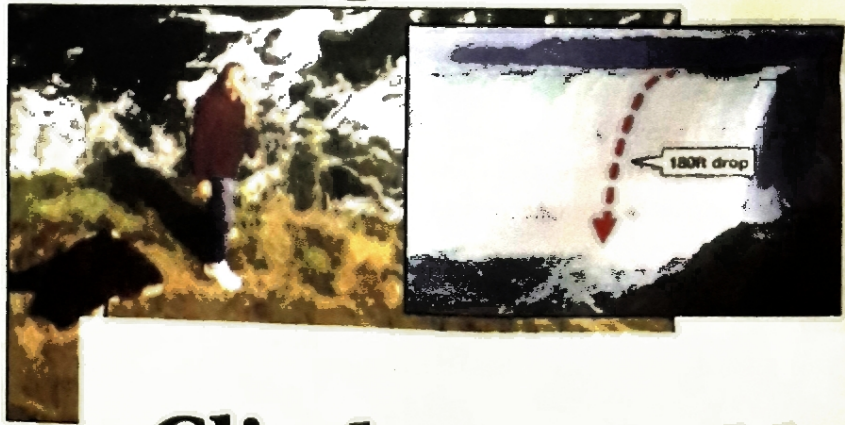
6 To download from the Internet.

5 Match lines in A and B. Practise saying them with contracted and weak forms.

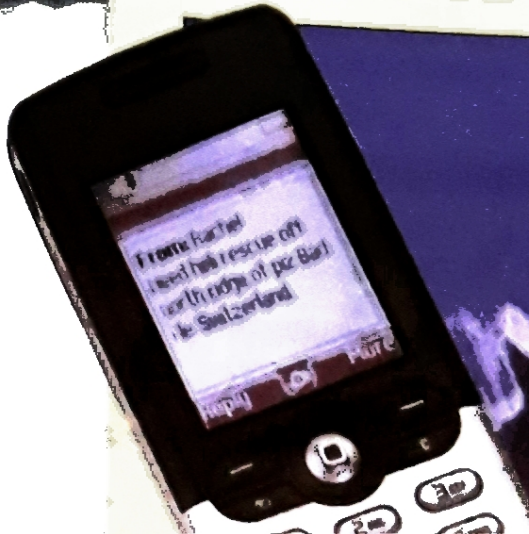
A	B
1 He was wearing	4 with a partner.
2 He'd been talking	3 to do it.
3 A friend had dared him	5 the next night.
4 She was climbing	2 about doing it for ages.
5 They were rescued	1 ordinary clothes.

T 32 Listen and check.

Man survives plunge over Niagara Falls



Climber saved by



LANGUAGE FOCUS

- 1 Complete the chart using the verb in brackets.

Past Simple	Past Continuous
(fall)	(read)
Past Perfect	Past Perfect Continuous
(hear)	(act)
Past Simple passive	Past Perfect passive
(arrest)	(burgle)

Look at tapescript T 3.1 on p127. Find an example of each tense. When do we use the Past Perfect? When do we use continuous tenses?

- 2 Why are different tenses used in these paragraphs?

John cooked a lovely meal. His guests had a good time. They left at midnight.

Just after midnight, John was looking at the mess. His guests had just left. He'd cooked a lovely meal, and everyone had had a good time.

► **Grammar Reference pp142–143**

PRACTICE

Discussing grammar

1 Compare the use of tenses in these sentences. Say which tense is used and why.

1 *I read* | a book on the plane.
I was reading

2 When Alice arrived, | *I made a cake.*
I was making a cake.
I had made a cake.

3 *The film started* | when we got to the cinema.
The film had started

4 He was sacked because | *he had stolen some money.*
he had been stealing money for years.

5 When I got to the garage, my car | *was being repaired.*
had been repaired.

EVERYDAY ENGLISH

Showing interest and surprise

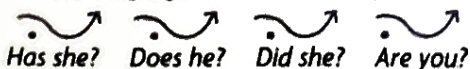
1 **T 3.6** Listen to the dialogue. Write in B's answers. How does she show interest and surprise?

- A Jade's got a new job.
 B A new job? Good for her!
 A Apparently, she's going to work in a castle.
 B Is she? How amazing!
 A Yes. And it's in Slovenia.
 B In Slovenia? That's interesting.
 A Unfortunately, her boss can't speak much English.
 B Can't she? I thought everyone could these days!

2 B uses *echo questions* and *reply questions*. Which are which? Practise the conversation with your partner. Pay particular attention to the stress and intonation. ✓

Music of English

To show interest, the intonation on echo and reply questions should start high, go down, and then go up high at the end.


 Has she? Does he? Did she? Are you?

T 3.7 Listen and repeat.

If you use these short questions without any intonation, you will sound bored and uninterested!

3 Complete the conversations with either an echo or a reply question.

- 1 A Sam wants to apologize.
 B Does he?
 A Yes. He's broken your mother's Chinese vase.
 B My mother's Chinese vase? Oh, no!
- 2 A We had a terrible holiday.
 B Did you?
 A Yes. It rained all the time.
 B Did it?
 A Yes. And the food was disgusting!
 B Was it? What a drag!
- 3 A I'm broke.
 B Are you? How come?
 A Because I just had a phone bill for £500.
 B £500? Why so much?
 A Because my best friend's in Korea.
 B Is he? How interesting!
- 4 A It took me three hours to get here.
 B Did it?
 A Yes. There was a traffic jam ten miles long.
 B Ten miles? That's awful!
 A Now I've got a headache!
 B Have you? Poor darling. I'll get you something for it.
- 5 A I'm on a mountain, watching the sun set.
 B Are you?
 A Yes. And I've got something very important to tell you.
 B Have you? What is it? I can't wait!
 A You'd better sit down. I'd like us to move here for good.
 B Move here? Wow!

T 3.8 Listen and compare. Practise them with a partner.

4 Your teacher will read out some sentences about himself/herself. Respond, using a reply question or an echo.