

8.2 Past Perfect

We use the Past Perfect to talk about the earliest of two or more events in the past. The action expressed in the Past Perfect happened before the action usually expressed in the Past Simple:

When Alex got to hospital, he **had** already **come** out in a rash. (The rash appeared before he got to the hospital.)

Notice how the Past Perfect changes the meaning of these sentences:

The children **went** to sleep when we came. (First we came and then the children went to sleep.)

The children **had gone** to sleep when we came. (The children were asleep when we came.)

We often use **by** with the Past Perfect, e.g. *by the age of six, by the time I was six, by 1978:*

By the time I was six, I had learnt to read.

Affirmative			Negative		
I/You/He/ She/It/We/ They	had	watched TV.	I/You/ He/She/ It/We/ They	hadn't (had not)	watched TV.
Yes/No questions			Short answers		
Had	I/you/he/ she/it/we/ they	watched TV?	Yes, I/you/he/she/it/we/they had. No, I/you/he/she/it/we/they hadn't.		
Wh- questions			Subject questions		
What	had	I/you/he/ she/it/ we/they watched?	Who	had	watched TV?

1 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

- Betty _____ (feel) nervous because she _____ (not be) in hospital before.
- Sue _____ (wait) nearly an hour before the doctor **3** I _____ (see) her.
_____ (forget) to take my medicine so I _____ (begin) to feel dizzy.
- By the time Mandy _____ (fall) asleep she _____ (finish) reading her book on acupuncture. **5**
Tony _____ (come out) in a rash, probably because he _____ (eat) nuts.
- Before I _____ (buy) a new pair of glasses I _____ (had) my eyes tested at the optician's.
- He _____ (see) the dentist because he _____ (break) a tooth playing football.
- By the time the ambulance _____ (arrive), Jane _____ (begin) to feel much better.

2 Choose the correct explanation, a or b, for each sentence.

- The patient had left the health centre when the receptionist arrived.
a The receptionist saw the patient.
b The receptionist didn't see the patient.
- When Rodney broke his arm, he grew a beard.
a He broke his arm with a beard.
b He broke his arm without a beard.
- Just before the plane had landed I began to feel ill.
a I began to feel ill while flying.
b I began to feel ill on the ground.
- By the time we got to the cinema, I had got a headache.
a My headache started before we arrived at the cinema.
b My headache started after we arrived at the cinema.
- I stopped eating cake when I got a stomachache.
a My stomachache started while I was eating the cake.
b My stomachache started after eating the cake.
- Ida sat down when she started to feel dizzy.
a Ida sat down before she started to feel dizzy.
b Ida sat down after she started to feel dizzy.

3 Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. Use the Past Perfect and the Past Simple in each sentence.

- I wasn't worried about the mystery illness. The doctors found a cure for it before.
The doctors _____ so _____
- The patient was released from hospital. Then a new problem was found.
When the new problem _____
- The ambulance arrived. Before then, the police officer saved the woman's life.
The police officer _____ before _____
- I couldn't pay for my medicine. I left my wallet at home.
I _____ because _____
- Michael couldn't concentrate on the lecture. He began to feel ill.
Because Michael _____
- My thumb hurt. I answered all of my text messages.
By the time _____

4 Choose the correct option.

- By the time the ambulance *had arrived* / *arrived*, the woman *stopped* / *had stopped* bleeding.
- My sore throat *went* / *had gone* by the time I *found* / *had found* a chemist's that was open.
- My back *hurt* / *had hurt* because I *fell* / *had fallen* down the stairs.
- I *had* / *had had* a pain in my right leg before I *ran* / *had run* the marathon.
- Hannah's temperature *dropped* / *had dropped* after she *took* / *had taken* the medicine.
- By the time we *got* / *had got* to Calais on the ferry, I *started* / *had started* to feel seasick.