

Past simple

We use the past simple to talk about **past events in chronological order**; i.e. the main events of a story.

- *When she **opened** the door, she **pretended** that we weren't there and she **went** to her room.*
- *He **called** me and **asked** me to pick him up, but when I **arrived** he wasn't there.*

We also use the past simple to talk about **past habits** or **past states**.

- *We often **went** to the bar for a drink before dinner.*
- *He really **liked** sport, and **was** very fit.*

Past continuous

We use the past continuous to **set the scene** in a story.

- *Last night I **was walking** home and **listening** to my ipod when ...*
- *The sun **was shining** and lots of tourists **were lying** on the beach.
Suddenly ...*

We use the past continuous for **actions in progress** in the past or longer actions interrupted by shorter actions in past simple.

- *After dinner I went into the living room and saw that she **was crying**.*
- *When she opened the door, we **were talking** about her.*

We use the past perfect simple to talk about an earlier past: events which happened before the main event.

Earlier single events

We use the past perfect simple to talk about earlier events and experiences, or single actions completed earlier in the past.

- *When she opened the door, he **had** already **left**.*
- *I realised that I **had been** there before.*
- *When I met her, I **had** never **been** in a serious relationship.*
- *He noticed I **had cleaned** the car. It was smooth and shiny.*

We also use the past perfect simple (and not continuous) to say **how much or how many** we had done of something earlier in the past.

- *We **had driven** 500 miles and we needed some rest.*
- *How many hours **had** he **slept** when you woke him up?*

Duration from earlier in the past (stative verbs)

We use the past perfect simple with stative verbs to talk about states or situations that had started earlier in the past. We often use **how long**, **for** or **since**, **always**, **etc**.

- *The day Anne died, they **had been** married for 48 years.*
- *The day I left, I **had been** in England for exactly 4 years.*
- *She told me she **had** always **hated** her sister.*

Past perfect continuous

Duration from earlier in the past (dynamic verbs)

We use the past perfect continuous with dynamic verbs to talk about **longer continuous actions that started earlier in the past** than the main events of the story.

- *I was very angry. I **had been waiting** for him in the cold, and he didn't call to say he'd be late.*
- *We **had been driving** for less than an hour when the car broke down.*

Repeated actions from earlier in the past (dynamic verbs)

We use the past perfect continuous with dynamic verbs to talk about **repeated actions from earlier in the past**.

- *I couldn't believe it. She **had been writing** a letter every day for over a year.*

Used to + infinitive

Repeated actions in the past

We can use **used to + infinitive** to talk about **things** that **we did repeatedly** in the past.

- *When I was a child, I **used to go** skiing every winter.*
- *From the age of 12 till I was 16, I **used to dance** at weekends.*
- *I **didn't use to smoke** before I got this job.*

Situations or states that are no longer true

We can use **used to + infinitive** to talk about situations or states (stative verbs) which were true in the past, but they are no longer true.

- *As a child I **used to be** blond.*

- I **used to live** with my mum when I was a child.

Would + infinitive

Repeated actions in the past

We can use **would + infinitive** to talk about **things** that **we repeatedly did** in the past.

- Every Saturday we **would go** to the shopping centre with my parents.
- My 5th-grade teacher **would tell** me to shut up at the beginning of every class.

~~Situations or states that are no longer true~~

We cannot use **would** to talk about situations or states (stative verbs) which are no longer true.

- I **used to be** blond as a child. (NOT ~~I **would be** blond as a child.~~)