

2.1 Past events – narrative forms

GR2.1)))

- Mary Kingsley **decided** to travel to Africa, a place she **had** always **dreamt** of visiting.
- She **had** two missions to complete while she **was travelling** the continent.
- Her father's friends **had warned her** of the dangers, but she **ignored** them.
- She **encountered** animals and sights she **hadn't seen** before.

A narrative is a description of a past event. The main tenses we generally use in a narrative are the past simple, the past continuous and the past perfect.

- We use the past simple to describe the main events of the story.

*I **looked** out of the window and **saw** the Taj Mahal for the first time.*

- We use the past continuous to talk about a) background actions or situations that were in progress at the time of the main events or b) two actions in progress at the same time.

*I **was waiting** for them to arrive when I heard the news. We **were drinking** coffee and Haruki **was doing** some shopping.*

- We use the past perfect to show that a past action or situation took place a) before one of the main events or b) before the story began.

*We **'d been driving** all day and were totally exhausted. The hotel was not as nice as we **had expected**.*

Note that we often use time words such as *when, while, before, after, as soon as* and *by the time* to connect events using the different narrative tenses.

*They were both working in Paris **when** they first met.*

***By the time** we arrived, we had got lost several times.*

- Complete the sentences with the correct past simple, past continuous or past perfect form of the verbs in brackets.

- As Eva _____ (walk) through the square, she _____ (see) an old friend who she _____ (not see) for years.
- We _____ (be) at the airport for over two hours before they _____ (tell) us that the flight was cancelled.
- I _____ (fall) asleep while I _____ (watch) TV last night. We _____ (watch) a really boring film.
- Dr Brown _____ (walk) out of the station when he _____ (realize) that he _____ (leave) one of his bags on the train.
- Laurent _____ (live) in three different countries by the time he _____ (be) five years old.
- The accident _____ (happen) because the driver _____ (look) at his mobile when the car in front of him suddenly _____ (stop) and he _____ (not be able) to brake in time.

- Complete the text with the correct past simple, past continuous or past perfect form of the verbs in brackets.

In 2010, a British adventurer ¹ _____ (become) the first person to walk the entire length of the Amazon after a 6,000-mile trek. When he finally ² _____ (reach) the finish, he ³ _____ (walk) for nearly two-and-a-half years.

Ex-army officer Ed Stafford, 34, ⁴ _____ (arrive) at the finishing point, the mouth of the river in Brazil, 859 days after he ⁵ _____ (set off) from its source in Peru. He ⁶ _____ (begin) the epic journey with walking partner Luke Collyer, 37, an outdoor activities instructor. But three months after they ⁷ _____ (set off) on their journey, the pair ⁸ _____ (fall out) after an argument and Collyer ⁹ _____ (return) to the UK.

Along the way Stafford ¹⁰ _____ (encounter) poisonous snakes, scorpions, electric eels and piranhas. But Stafford's scariest moment was at the hands of local tribesmen. One day, Stafford ¹¹ _____ (approach) a small village when five or six locals suddenly ¹² _____ (start) running towards him with machetes, guns, and bows and arrows. The tribesmen ¹³ _____ (capture) Stafford, but they ¹⁴ _____ (allow) him to leave soon after. By the end of the trip, Stafford ¹⁵ _____ (endure) hundreds of wasp stings and ¹⁶ _____ (suffer) an estimated 50,000 mosquito bites.

2.2 Past perfect forms

GR2.2)))

- 1 I **hadn't set** the alarm, so I got to work late.
- 2 By the time Nicola called, Anna **had left** for the station.
- 3 Sara **hadn't been working** there long when she was **promoted**.
- 4 They **'d been painting** the room for nearly an hour when they realized **they'd been using** the wrong colour.

Form

We form the past perfect simple with *had* + past participle.

*The play **had started** when he got to the theatre.*

*They **hadn't met** before.*

We form the past perfect continuous with *had* + *been* + *-ing*.

*It **had been raining** for hours.*

*I **hadn't been feeling** well for a few days.*

In speaking and in informal writing, we often contract *had to 'd*, especially after subject pronouns.

*We **'d met** a few times before.*

*It **'d been raining** for days.*

Use

We use the past perfect to show that something happened before something else in the past.

- We use the past perfect simple to talk about actions that were completed before the moment we are talking about.

*Francis **had left** when we arrived.*

***Had** the meeting **started** by the time you got there?*

- We use the past perfect continuous to talk about actions that continued for a period of time or were repeated over a period of time. This action may or may not have continued up to the moment we are talking about it.

*I **'d been living** in Italy for three years when we first met.*

*When I woke up, I saw that it **had been raining**.*

- We usually use the past perfect simple and not the past perfect continuous when we are talking about states rather than actions, with verbs like *be*, *have*, *know*.

*We **'d known** each other for about five years before we became friends.*

Note that we usually use the past simple to refer to the more recent action.

*By the time we **got** to the station, the train **had already left**.*

Also, we often use *already* with the past perfect to emphasize that the action happened earlier. We also often use *just* to show that the action happened a very short time before.

*The bank **had already** closed by the time we got there.*

*Samir **had just** left when we arrived.*

- 1 Complete the sentences using the past perfect simple form of the verbs in the box.

already/eat not/see sell

- 1 A Did you get a ticket for the concert?
B No, they _____ out by the time I tried to get one.
- 2 A You and Adrian talked a lot last night.
B Yes, we _____ each other for months. We had a lot to talk about.
- 3 A Why didn't you join us for lunch?
B Because I _____.

- 2 Complete the sentences using the past perfect continuous form of the verbs in the box.

look not wait travel

- 1 A Where was this photo taken? You look exhausted.
B I was. I _____ for days. I'd just arrived in Nepal from the south of India, by bus.
- 2 A I saw you yesterday coming out of that new clothes shop.
B That's right. I _____ at suits. I need a new one.
- 3 A Sorry I was so late last night.
B Oh, don't worry about it. We _____ very long – only about ten minutes.

- 3 Complete the story of the Bermuda Triangle with the past perfect simple or past perfect continuous form of the verbs in brackets.

In December 1945, five military planes were on a training flight after they ¹ _____ (take off) from an airbase in Florida in the USA. The planes ² _____ (fly) for about an hour and they ³ _____ (fly) about 300 miles when without warning, the navigational instruments on all the planes, which ⁴ _____ (work) perfectly up to that point, suddenly stopped working. Radio contact was then lost. None of the planes or crew was ever seen again. The official explanation is that before they vanished, the planes ⁵ _____ (fly) into an area of unusual magnetic activity. It is believed that this ⁶ _____ (cause) their compasses and other equipment to malfunction. The planes were flying over the Atlantic Ocean near Bermuda and the story of the Bermuda Triangle was born. By the mid-1970s, sixteen more planes ⁷ _____ (mysteriously/disappear) in the same area. And it appears that in almost all cases, the navigational equipment ⁸ _____ (stop) working just before the planes disappeared.