



Tikrit University

College of Education for Women

English Department

Subject : Grammar

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**Past Perfect Tense**

The Past Perfect tense is quite an easy tense to understand and to use. This tense talks about the "past in the past".

In this lesson we look at the **structure** and **use** of the Past Perfect tense, followed by a **quiz** to check your understanding.

### How do we make the Past Perfect tense?

The structure of the Past Perfect tense is:

subject	+	auxiliary <i>have</i>	+	main verb
		conjugated in Past Simple		
		<b>had</b>		<b>past participle</b>

The auxiliary verb (have) is conjugated in the Past Simple: *had*

The main verb is invariable in past participle form: *-ed (or irregular)*

For negative sentences we insert **not** between the auxiliary verb and the main verb.

For question sentences, we **exchange** the subject and the auxiliary verb.

Look at these example sentences with the Past Perfect tense:

	subject	auxiliary verb		main verb	
+	I	had		finished	my work.

+	You	had		stopped	before me.
-	She	had	not	gone	to school.
-	We	had	not	left.	
?	Had	you		arrived?	
?	Had	they		eaten	dinner?

### Contraction with Past Perfect

When we use the Past Perfect in speaking, we often contract the subject and the auxiliary verb. We also sometimes do this in informal writing:

I had	I'd
you had	you'd
he had she had it had	he'd she'd it'd
we had	we'd

they had	they'd
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- I'd eaten already.
- They'd gone home.

In negative sentences, we may contract the auxiliary verb and "not":

- I hadn't finished my meal.
- Anthony hadn't had a day off for months.

The 'd contraction is also used for the auxiliary verb **would**. For example, **we'd** can mean:

- We **had**, OR
- We **would**

But usually the main verb is in a different form, for example:

- We had **arrived** (past participle)
- We would **arrive** (base)

It is always clear from the context.

### How do we use the Past Perfect tense?

The Past Perfect tense expresses action in the **past** *before* another action in the **past**. This is the **past in the past**. For example:

- The train left at 9am. We arrived at 9:15am. When we arrived, the train **had left**.

The train **had left** when we arrived.

past	present	future
Train leaves in past at 9:00		

9:00	9:15	
We arrive in past at 9:15		

Look at some more examples:

- I wasn't hungry. I **had** just **eaten**.
- They were hungry. They **had** not **eaten** for five hours.
- I didn't know who he was. I **had** never **seen** him before.
- "Mary wasn't at home when I arrived." / "Really? Where **had** she **gone**?"

You can sometimes think of the Past Perfect tense like the Present Perfect tense, but instead of the time being **now** the time is **before**.

	have done →		
had done →			
	<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>

For example, imagine that you arrive at the station at 9:15am. The stationmaster says to you:

- "You *are* too late. The train **has left**."

Later, you tell your friends:

- "We *were* too late. The train **had left**."