

The past perfect tense

Form: Subject + had + past participle form of the verb

- He **had worked**.
- She **had played**.
- They **had gone**.
- We **had waited**.

The **past perfect tense** denotes an action completed at some point in the past before some other action commenced. Note that when we have to refer to two actions in the past, the **past perfect** is used for the earlier action, and the **simple past** for the later one.

- The patient **had died** before the doctor arrived.
- The train **had left** before we reached the station.

The past perfect continuous tense

Form: **Subject + had + been + ing form of the verb**

- He **had been writing**.
- I **had been reading**.
- They **had been working**.

The **past perfect continuous tense** is used to talk about an action which started some time in the past and continued till a later point of time in the past when some other action commenced.

- The war **had been going** on for two years when John enlisted.
- I **had been giving** him financial assistance till he got a job.

In sentence 1, the war started some time in the past, continued for two years and was still continuing when John enlisted.