

TENSES

PAST SIMPLE

CASES & EXAMPLES

an action which happened at a definite time in the past. The time is stated, already known or implied.

They went camping by the lake last month.
(When did they go camping? Last month. The time is stated.)

actions which happened immediately one after the other in the past

First she paid the driver, then she got out of the taxi.

past habits or states which are now finished. In such cases we can also use the expression **used to**

Kitchens were/ used to be very different a hundred years ago.

TIME EXPRESSIONS

PAST SIMPLE

yesterday, then, when, How long ago ...?, last night/ week/ month/ year/ Tuesday, etc., three days/ weeks, etc. ago, in 1997, etc.

TENSES

PAST CONTINUOUS

CASES & EXAMPLES

an action which was in progress at a stated time in the past

We do not mention when the action started or finished

At seven o'clock yesterday evening they were having dinner.

(We do not know when they started or finished their dinner.)

an action which was in progress when another action interrupted it.

We use the past continuous for the action in progress (longer action) and the past simple for the action which interrupted it (shorter action)

He was walking down the street when he ran into an old friend.

two or more simultaneous past actions

She was talking on her mobile phone while she was driving to work.

to describe the atmosphere, setting, etc. in the introduction to a story before we describe the main events

One beautiful autumn afternoon, Ben was strolling down a quiet country lane. The birds were singing and the leaves were rustling in the breeze.

TENSES

PAST PERFECT

CASES & EXAMPLES

an action which happened before another past action or before a stated time in the past

She had finished work when she met her friends for coffee.

(She finished work first and then she met her friends.)

an action which finished in the past and whose result was visible in the past

He was happy. He had signed an important contract.
(The action finished in the past and its result was visible in the past, too.)

The past perfect is the past equivalent of the present perfect

He had fixed the old armchair. It looked brand new.
(The action — had fixed — happened in the past. The result — looked brand new — was also visible in the past.)
He has fixed the old armchair. It looks brand new.
(The action — has fixed — happened in the past. The result — looks brand new — is still visible in the present.)

We can use the past perfect or the past simple with **before** or **after** without any difference in meaning

They went out after it **had** stopped / **stopped** raining.

TENSES

PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

CASES & EXAMPLES

to put emphasis on the duration of an action which started and finished in the past before another past action or a stated time in the past, usually with **since** or **for**

They had been looking for a house for six months before they found one they liked.

an action which lasted for some time in the past and whose result was visible in the past

Last Friday Ron had to fly to New York. His flight was delayed. He was annoyed. He had been waiting at the airport for three hours. (He waited at the airport for three hours and the result of the action was visible in the past, too.)

the past perfect continuous is the past equivalent of the present perfect continuous

I had been driving for ten hours, so I felt exhausted.
(The action — had been driving — lasted for some time in the past. The result — felt exhausted — was also visible in the past.)

I have been driving for ten hours, so I feel exhausted.
(The action — have been driving started in the past. The result — feel exhausted — is still visible in the present.)

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PAST CONTINUOUS

while, when, as, all morning/ evening/ day/ night, etc.

PAST PERFECT

before, after, already, just, for, since, till/ until

PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

for, since, how long, before, until, etc.

TENSES

USED TO / WOULD

CASES & EXAMPLES

We use **used to + infinitive** to refer to past habits or states. In such cases, **used to** can be replaced by the past simple with no difference in meaning

We use the past simple, and not **used to**, in the following cases:

- to refer to an action which happened at a definite time in the past
- to say how many times an action happened at a definite time in the past

We use **would/used to** for repeated actions or routines in the past

We do not use **would** with state verbs

Be used to + noun/ pronoun/ -ing form = be accustomed to, be in the habit of

Get used to + noun/pronoun/-ing form = become accustomed to

They **used to** travel/ travelled a lot when they were younger.
(They don't any more).

~drove to work yesterday
(Not **used to** drive)

~ I went to the cinema four times last month.
(Not I **used to** go to the cinema four times last month)

We **would/ used to** eat out on Sundays.

They **used to** live in London.

I **used to** have a pet dog.

- a) They are **used to** the cold. (present)
- b) I don't mind walking. I'm **used to** it. (present)
- c) She wasn't **used to** living in the country. (past)

- a) I am **getting used to** the weather. (present)
- b) He didn't like using the computer at first, but he got **used to** it. (past)
- c) She will soon **get used to** wearing contact lenses. (future)