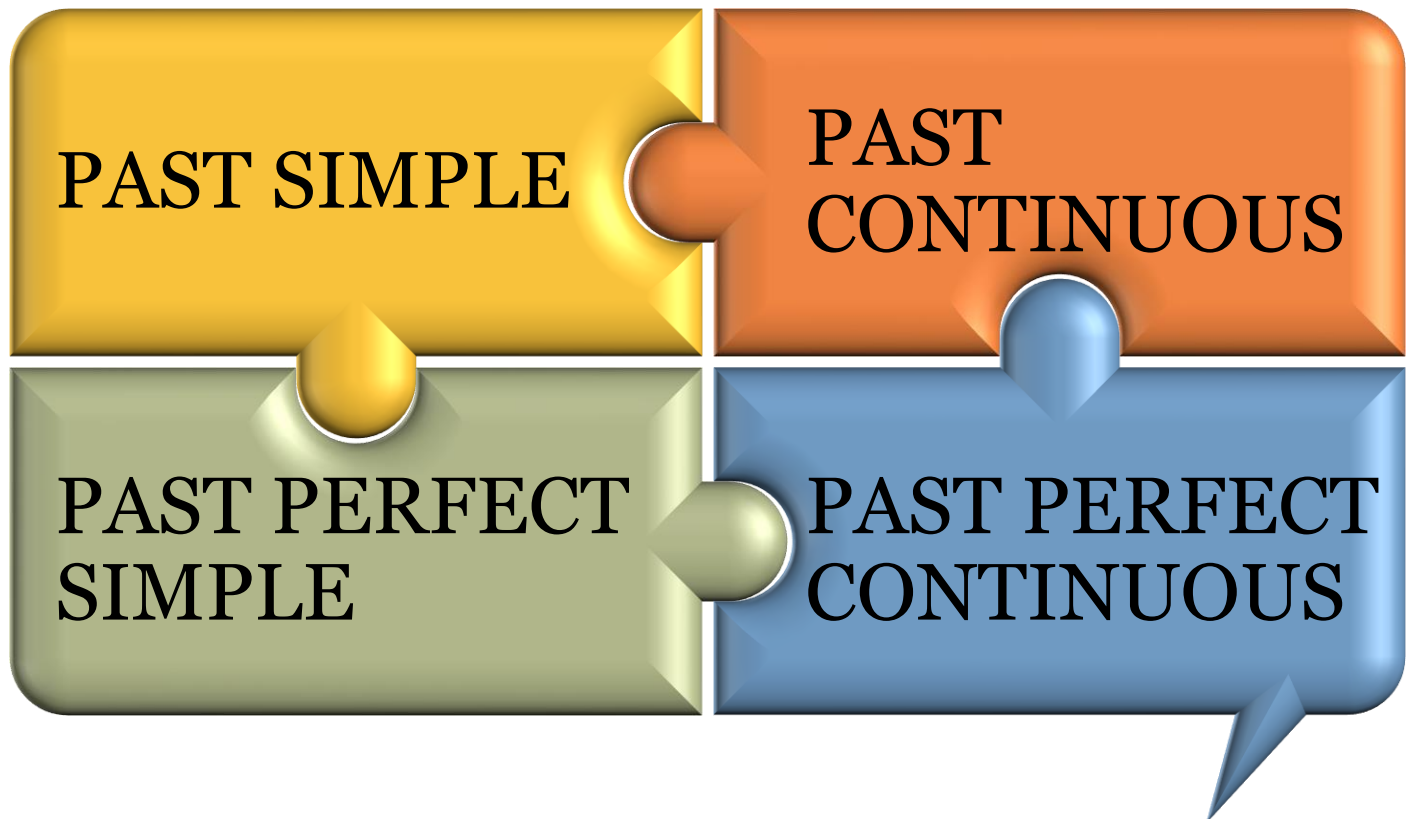


NARRATIVE TENSES

STUDY GUIDE



I. How to Form the Narrative Tenses

Past Simple

Regular Verbs are formed by adding the [ed] suffix to the main verb

Irregular Verbs all past simple forms must be learned individually

- + We *thank**ed*** him for his help.
- + We *dro**ve*** instead of flying.
- Do** is the auxiliary verb to help form questions and negatives.
- ? **Did** we *change* the start time?
- We ***didn't*** talk about the new schedule.

Past Continuous

Past of [**be**] plus the present participle [**ing**]

- + I ***was** finish**ing*** the report this time yesterday.
- + We ***were** stand**ing*** outside when it happened.
- ? What ***were*** you *do**ing*** yesterday?
- We ***weren't** film**ing*** the ceremony.

Past Perfect Simple

Had is the auxiliary verb to help form affirmative, questions, and negatives.

Regular Verb past participles have the same [ed] suffix on the main verb

Irregular Verbs all past participle forms must be learned individually

- + We ***had** expect**ed*** more people.
- + He ***had** **worn*** the same shirt the day before.
- ? How many times ***had*** he *call**ed***.
- You ***hadn't told*** me Jennifer was coming.

Past Perfect Continuous

Past Perfect of [**be: had been**] plus the present participle [**ing**]

- + I ***had been** wait**ing*** for you to finish your speech.
- ? Had you ***been** stand**ing*** there this whole time?
- You ***hadn't been** pay**ing*** attention, so I played a joke on you.

II. What the Narrative Tenses Express through the verb tense (the Aspect)

Past Simple

Simple Verbs are finished in the Past.

Past Simple communicates:
finished, when

Past Simple used to advance the timeline to the next chronological action (both simple and action sequences)

Simple action interrupts a Continuous action; it can also be the shorter of two "continuous" actions

Past Continuous

Past Continuous communicates:

Unfinished longer actions, when

Unfinished repetition of shorter actions, when

When two parallel actions are continuous

For the longer action that gets interrupted by a shorter (simple) action

Past Perfect Simple

Perfect Simple Verbs are finished in relation to another time or action

Past Perfect communicates:
finished, before when

An action in the Past Perfect Simple is the first action in a 2-action sequence

An action in the Past Perfect Simple can imply Cause and Effect between the two actions

The Cumulative Aspect of the Past Perfect Simple means we can group related actions that have finished at separate times into one general statement

Past Perfect Continuous

Past Perfect Continuous verb tense adds or implies duration to the continuous action (unfinished, for how long)

Past Perfect Continuous verb tense adds or implies that an action had repeated, for how long

Past Perfect Continuous verb tense defines the time by which the continuous action finished or stopped repeating

III. Aspect Examples in Practice

Follow along this imagined dialogue and story of a gap year trip from Los Angeles to Europe and back. Along the way, notice tenses used in the story and the accompanying explanations!

Gina When **did** you **take** this photo?

Rosa I **took** that picture *during my gap year in 2019*.

Gina But you hate flying. How **did** you **get** all the way to Paris?

Notice the key words in each sentence. In the first question, when as the question word is the definite time Gina is asking about. Therefore, the question is Past Simple. Furthermore, Rosa answers by saying exactly when the action was taken.

Perfect Aspect: This action provides context and had happened sometime *before*

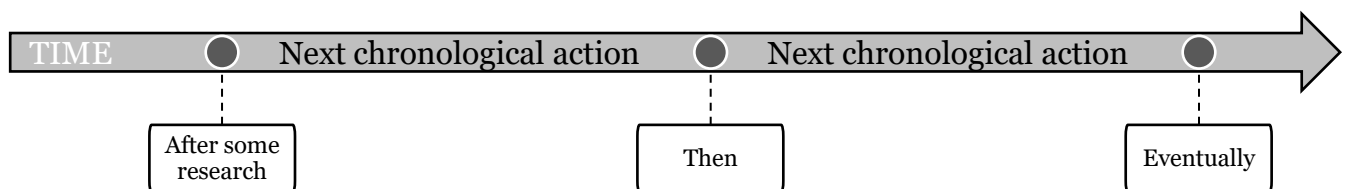
Rosa For starters, we **had heard** somewhere that you can take a cruise ship when they relocate from America to Europe and vice versa.

Simple Aspect: In the next three lines of the dialogue, notice the discourse markers of time that push the story forward.

Rosa *After some research*, I **found** a cruise from Tampa, Florida to Barcelona.

Then, I **searched** how we were going to get from Los Angeles to Tampa without flying.

Eventually, I **found** an Amtrak train to take me from L.A. to Tampa.



Rosa I was **planning** to spend the summer travelling through as much of Europe as possible.

Continuous Aspect: This action was unfinished at the time.

The Story and Dialogue Continues...

Rosa In the end I **had travelled** through *Southern Europe, Central Europe, France*, and back to *Barcelona*.

Grouped grammatically

1

2

3

4

By the end of the trip, I **had travelled** from the *West Coast of the USA* to the *East Coast*, **taken** a cruise to *Barcelona*, **travelled** around *most of Europe*, then a **taken** another cruise back to *New York*, where I *then* **took** a train from coast to coast back to Los Angeles.

Gina Wow! You did all that to avoid flying?

Rosa Yes, it was amazing but tiring.

Past Perfect Cumulative Aspect: In the continued dialogue, Rosa talks about her trip in total. She outlines all of the places she had travelled to on her gap year in Europe. The perfect tenses grammatically groups all the related actions together. It expresses that even though these actions all finished at different times, they are related and, therefore, expressed together.



Gina So, what would you do on all those long train rides?

Rosa *Mostly*, I **would** just **do** some reading or **play** sudoku on my phone. However, sometimes I **would** just **walk around** and **try** to meet fellow travelers.

Repeated Past (frequency) Aspect [would]: Now Rosa is describing some typical (repetitive) actions when she was travelling. I wouldn't call these past habits, more like some behaviors that formed in the time of that trip in the past.

Gina And what about the cruise ship? Did you have any interesting experiences?

Rosa Well, I guess there was this one situation, as we **had been travelling** *for about 8 or 9 days* *when suddenly* a huge storm **hit** where we were. The water got really rough and a lot of people ended up getting sea sick. I'll tell you the ship had a rather unpleasant smell for the next few days. It didn't matter how much they were trying to clean it.

Perfect Continuous Aspect: The continuous aspect of this next Rosa part in the dialogue is an **interrupted action sequence** (their travel had been interrupted by the storm). Rosa also defined the **duration of time** the ship had been going before the storm hit. Therefore, the perfect continuous was used instead of just the past continuous tense.