

## 3

Past Tenses (active and passive): Past Simple, Past Continuous, Past Perfect Simple, Past Perfect Continuous; *used to / would*



## TEST YOURSELF

Read the pairs of sentences below and circle the sentence which is correct.

EXAMPLE: A I was seeing a very good film last week.

B I saw a very good film last week.

- 1 A I didn't sleep well at all last night.  
B I wasn't sleeping well at all last night.
- 2 A When I went into the living room, my father was watching TV  
B When I went into the living room, my father watched TV.
- 3 A Were you going swimming every day after school last month?  
B Did you go swimming every day after school last month?
- 4 A While I was crossed the road, I saw an accident.  
B While I was crossing the road, I saw an accident.
- 5 A I didn't mean to upset her; I'm sorry about it.  
B I wasn't meaning to upset her; I'm sorry about it.
- 6 A During the interview, all his answers were recorded for a radio programme.  
B During the interview, all his answers were recording for a radio programme.
- 7 A When I looked out of the window, the sky was blue and the sun shone.  
B When I looked out of the window, the sky was blue and the sun was shining.
- 8 A I didn't know that he had left.  
B I didn't know that he left.
- 9 A We were phoning him immediately  
B We phoned him immediately.
- 10 A They didn't use to eat late.  
B They didn't used to eat late.
- 11 A By the time they arrived, all the preparations had been made.  
B By the time they arrived, all the preparations had made.
- 12 A He was studying English for two years when he first went to Britain.  
B He had been studying English for two years when he first went to Britain.
- 13 A After they had done the shopping, they had started to prepare the meal.  
B After they had done the shopping, they started to prepare the meal.
- 14 A His clothes were wet because he had been walking in the rain.  
B His clothes were wet because he walked in the rain.
- 15 A Until he arrived, they were ready.  
B By the time he arrived, they were ready.
- 16 A I used to have short hair; now it's long.  
B I was used to have short hair; now it's long
- 17 A We would live in a small flat.  
B We used to live in a small flat.
- 18 A Did Julie buy anything new the other day?  
B Has Julie bought anything new the other day?
- 19 A They used to go to the cinema every week.  
B They would to go to the cinema every week.
- 20 A The family had finished eating before we arrived.  
B The family has finished eating before we arrived.

Check your answers with your teacher. How many of them are correct?

0-6: Start studying! 7-9: Try harder! 10-12: Quite good! 13-15: Good! 16-20: Excellent!



## Past Simple, Past Continuous

FORM	USE	EXAMPLES
<b>PAST SIMPLE</b> <b>Active</b> <b>verb+ed</b> (except irregular verbs) I worked. Did you work? He didn't work.  <b>Passive</b> <b>was / were + past participle</b>	a. a completed action that took place at a definite time in the past b. several actions in the past which happened one after another c. the main events in a narrative  to stress the action rather than the agent	<i>He <b>left</b> home two years ago.</i>  <i>He <b>got up, washed and went</b> downstairs.</i> <i>He <b>kissed</b> her and <b>asked</b> her to marry him.</i>  <i>The book <b>was published</b> in November.</i>
<b>PAST CONTINUOUS</b> <b>Active</b> <b>was / were + verb+ing</b> I was working. We were working. Was he working? Were you working? I wasn't working. They weren't working.  <b>Passive</b> <b>was / were being + past participle</b>	a. an action in progress at a specific time in the past b. two incomplete actions taking place at the same time in the past c. an action in progress (Past Continuous) interrupted by another action (Past Simple) d. background to a narrative  to stress the action rather than the agent	<i>At 8.00 p.m. last night, I <b>was doing</b> my homework.</i> <i>Tim <b>was listening</b> to the radio while Sam <b>was reading</b> a book.</i> <i>The children <b>were chatting</b> noisily when their teacher entered.</i>  <i>We went into the garden. The birds <b>were singing</b>.</i>  <i>The tents <b>were still being put up</b> when we arrived.</i>

**Remember!** We don't use the continuous form when a verb refers to a state, not an action. (See Stative Verbs, Unit 1.)

## TIME EXPRESSIONS

**Past Simple:** ago, yesterday, last week, in 1963, in November, when, the other day

**Past Continuous:** yesterday, at five o'clock, as, while

## used to / would

FORM	USE	EXAMPLES
<b>used to + bare infinitive</b>  <b>Negative</b> <b>didn't use to / never used to</b>  <b>Question</b> <b>Did you use to ... ?</b>  <b>would + bare infinitive</b> (not usually used in negative and question forms)	can only be used in past tense – replaces Past Simple a. an action that happened regularly in the past but no longer happens b. a past state or situation  past habits or repeated actions (only <i>used to</i> can refer to past states)	<i>I <b>used to play</b> tennis, but I don't have the energy now.</i> <i>Did you <b>use to have</b> a garden when you were a child?</i>  <i>She <b>would always sleep</b> with the window open.</i>

For information on *be used to* and *get used to*, see Unit 25.



## Past Perfect Simple, Past Perfect Continuous

FORM	USE	EXAMPLES
<b>PAST PERFECT SIMPLE</b>		
<b>Active</b> <b>had + past participle</b> She <i>had worked</i> . Had she <i>worked</i> ? We <i>hadn't worked</i> .	an action that happened before another action or period of time in the past	They <b>had moved</b> house before we arrived in the neighbourhood. By the time I arrived, everyone else <b>had gone</b> home. I <b>had</b> no sooner <b>got</b> to work than the phone rang.
<b>Passive</b> <b>had been + past participle</b>	to stress the action rather than the agent	The apple <b>had been eaten</b> .
<b>PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS</b>		
<b>Active</b> <b>had been + verb+ing</b> She <i>had been working</i> . Had she <i>been working</i> ? We <i>hadn't been working</i> .	a. an action which started before another action in the past and was still in progress at the time of the second action  b. an action that had just finished at a particular time in the past but was still relevant at that time (see Present Perfect Continuous)	I <b>had been reading</b> for an hour when the doorbell rang.  His hands were dirty because he <b>had been working</b> in the garden.
<b>Passive</b> No passive form		

## NOTE

We can often use Past Simple instead of Past Perfect when the time expression (e.g., before, after) makes it clear which action happened first.

After she *(had) finished* lunch she took a nap.

## TIME EXPRESSIONS

**Past Perfect Simple:** by the time, after, before, when, as soon as, already, for, no sooner . . . than

**Past Perfect Continuous:** for, since, all night / week / afternoon

## COMMON MISTAKES

The following sentences contain mistakes commonly made by students. Rewrite them correctly.



- Last winter they were going skiing every weekend.  
.....
- As a child I would love ice cream, but today I hate it.  
.....
- It was raining heavily when we were leaving the house.  
.....
- She hadn't to see him for years.  
.....
- He was working there for two years when he moved offices.  
.....
- The old house hadn't been painting for years.  
.....



## Grammar Practice

### A. Complete the following sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets. Use past tenses.

1. While we ..... (play) tennis yesterday, it ..... (start) to rain.
2. The report ..... (complete) before we ..... (leave) the office.
3. As we ..... (leave) the shop, we ..... (meet) our aunt, who ..... (invite) us to dinner.
4. By the time my mother ..... (come) home, we ..... (tidy up) our room.
5. He ..... (talk) to his friend for several minutes when his brother ..... (arrive) and ..... (interrupt) their conversation.
6. By the time I ..... (wake up), the rain ..... (stop) and the sun ..... (shine) again.

### B. Complete the following sentences with the correct time expression below. Use each time expression once only. There are more words than you need.

still • the other day • ago • for • since • by the time • already • until • while

1. .... we realised our mistake, we had driven 20 km in the wrong direction.
2. We couldn't use the swimming pool because it was ..... being repaired.
3. You'll never guess who I saw ..... – our old maths teacher!
4. Fifty years ..... , nobody had personal computers in their homes.
5. I read my book ..... I was waiting for my doctor's appointment.
6. Simon's mum was angry because he had been playing computer games ..... he got home from school.



### C. Complete the following paragraphs with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. It was the first time that Harry (1) ..... (ever fly) in an aeroplane and naturally, he was very excited. When the suitcases (2) ..... (pack), he and his family (3) ..... (set off) for the airport. Harry's parents liked travelling and they used (4) ..... (go) abroad quite often, so they (5) ..... (always wear) comfortable clothes for such journeys. Two hours after he left his house, Harry (6) ..... (sit) in the aeroplane, reading a magazine which he (7) ..... (buy) before he (8) ..... (board) the plane. He (9) ..... (read) his magazine for an hour when lunch (10) ..... (serve).
2. Last Saturday, my friend and I (1) ..... (decide) to go shopping in town. Once we (2) ..... (arrive) in the city centre, we (3) ..... (go) straight to the new music shop, which (4) ..... (open) by a local singer a few weeks before. We (5) ..... (try) for a few days to find the time to go there and we (6) ..... (not be) disappointed. There was a wonderful selection of CDs in the shop, and we both (7) ..... (spend) an enjoyable hour there before we (8) ..... (have) lunch.

### D. Complete the following sentences with the correct form of *used to* or *would*. You may need to use the negative. There may be more than one correct answer.

1. Sam ..... be in my class at school but he moved a year ago.
2. My brother ..... like Chinese food but now he likes it very much.
3. When we were young, our cousins ..... spend the weekends with us.
4. My grandmother ..... often tell us about her life when she was a girl.
5. .... go to the beach a lot when you were a child?
6. I ..... know this area very well but it has changed a lot.



## E. Read the text below and decide which answer, A, B, C or D, best fits each space.

## GRACE DARLING MUSEUM

The Grace Darling Museum (1) ..... by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in 1938 in memory of a young heroine who (2) ..... famous exactly 100 years earlier. Grace Darling (3) ..... in a lighthouse with her father on a tiny rocky island in the North Sea. She (4) ..... him keep the lighthouse working and (5) ..... watch for sailors in trouble. She was just 22 years old when, on 7th September 1838, a ship (6) ..... onto the rocks in a storm. She helped her father row a tiny boat out to the wreck to rescue nine survivors. People at the time were amazed that a young woman could show such strength and courage, and portraits (7) ..... showing her battling against wind and waves, her hair flying behind her. The museum contains various items belonging to Grace and the boat which (8) ..... in the famous rescue.

- |                       |                   |                    |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. A was established  | B had established | C established      |
| 2. A has become       | B had become      | C was becoming     |
| 3. A has lived        | B was lived       | C lived            |
| 4. A used to help     | B was helping     | C had been helping |
| 5. A was also keeping | B would also keep | C was also kept    |
| 6. A ran              | B used to run     | C had run          |
| 7. A were painting    | B painted         | C were painted     |
| 8. A would use        | B was used        | C was being used   |



## Exam Practice

- A. **KEY WORD TRANSFORMATIONS** Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

**TIP!** Make sure your answer does not include any unnecessary words. Write only 2-5 words.

- I had to tidy my desk before I could get down to work. **until**  
I couldn't get down to work ..... my desk.
- Jennifer never forgot her mother's birthday. **always**  
Jennifer ..... her mother's birthday.
- An Italian drove the winning car in the race. **by**  
The winning car in the race ..... an Italian.
- The postman arrived in the middle of our breakfast. **while**  
The postman arrived ..... breakfast.
- I hadn't finished checking my test when the examiner told me to stop. **still**  
I ..... my test when the examiner told me to stop.
- Allan studied hard all day so he was very tired that night. **because**  
Allan was very tired that night ..... hard all day.
- The boys often played football after school. **would**  
The boys ..... after school.
- This is the house where I lived when I was a boy. **used**  
This is the house where ..... I was a boy.

**B. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.**

1. They ..... on our street for several weeks when I first met them.
  - a. were living
  - b. have lived
  - c. lived
  - d. had been living
2. When George ..... at the bus stop, his friends were already there.
  - a. arrived
  - b. had arrived
  - c. was arriving
  - d. was arrived
3. Sandra looked in her bag and discovered that her wallet .....
  - a. was stolen
  - b. had been stolen
  - c. had stolen
  - d. stole
4. They ..... to him immediately after the interview.
  - a. had been written
  - b. were writing
  - c. wrote
  - d. were written
5. "Why did the boss send Linda home yesterday?"
 

"Because she ..... ill."

  - a. was looked
  - b. had looked
  - c. has been looking
  - d. looked
6. "Why did they lower their voices?"
 

"They obviously didn't want me to hear what ....."

  - a. was being discussed
  - b. discussed
  - c. would discuss
  - d. were discussing
7. "What ..... between 9.00 and 10.00 last night?" the policeman asked.
  - a. were you doing
  - b. had you done
  - c. have you done
  - d. were you done
8. "Did you understand the book?"
 

"No, not ..... I had read the translation."

  - a. since
  - b. yet
  - c. until
  - d. while
9. The first airplane ..... by the Wright brothers in 1903.
  - a. was flying
  - b. was flown
  - c. flew
  - d. had flown
10. Henry was out of breath because he ..... to catch the train.
  - a. ran
  - b. had been running
  - c. was running
  - d. used to run

**C. OPEN CLOZE** Read the text below and think of the word which best fits each space. Use only one word in each space.

**TIP!** Remember to read the whole text carefully before you start.

**A BIRTHDAY SURPRISE**

Generally, Janet (1) ..... get home at about 6.30, but that evening she got home later than expected because she had missed her usual train. The house was very quiet and in total darkness; obviously nobody else had come home (2) ..... She had been in the house for only a few seconds (3) ..... she heard a slight noise in the living room and she (4) ..... there, wondering what to do. (5) ..... she was trying to find the courage to go (6) ..... the living room and see what was happening, she (7) ..... someone laugh quietly, and then there was silence again. Finally, Janet went in. Suddenly the lights (8) ..... switched on. Her family and all her friends were in the room, singing "Happy Birthday". A surprise party had (9) ..... organised for her! Everyone had been sitting in the dark living room (10) ..... an hour, waiting for her to come home. They all (11) ..... a wonderful time at the party. Janet had not (12) ..... to celebrate her birthday, so the whole evening was a real surprise for her.