Past Tenses

CEFR B2 · Past perfect, narrative sequencing and perfect vs simple

WS1 Past Perfect · WS2 Sequencing a Narrative · WS3 Perfect Simple vs Continuous · WS4 Analysis & Writing · Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Past Perfect

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Reference: had + Past Participle

The **past perfect** (had + past participle) describes an action that happened **before** another past action. It makes the order of events clear. Use it for the "earlier past"; use the past simple for the later events.

Structure	Meaning	Example
had + pp	earlier past action	The train **had left** before we arrived.
with by the time	completed before a point	**By the time** he called, I **had gone**.
with after / before	clarifies sequence	**After** she **had eaten**, she left.
reported thought	already true earlier	I realised I **had forgotten** my keys.

Part A – Complete with the Past Perfect

1. When we got to the station, the train _____ (already / leave).
2. She couldn't get in because she _____ (lose) her keys.
3. By the time I arrived, they _____ (finish) dinner.
4. He told me he _____ (never / see) the sea before.

Part B – Past Simple or Past Perfect?

1. After I _____ (finish) my work, I _____ (go) home.
2. She _____ (feel) nervous because she _____ (not / prepare).
3. When the guests _____ (arrive), we _____ (already / cook) everything.

Score: ____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Sequencing a Narrative

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Reference: Three Layers of the Past

A well-told past narrative combines three tenses: the **past continuous** for background, the **past simple** for the main events in sequence, and the **past perfect** for earlier events or explanations. Time linkers (*when, while, as soon as, by the time, after, before*) hold the sequence together.

Tense	Role in narrative	Example
Past continuous	background / scene	The rain **was falling** steadily.
Past simple	main events, in order	She **opened** the door and **stepped** out.
Past perfect	earlier past / reason	The street **had flooded** overnight.

Part A – Choose the Correct Tense

Complete the narrative with past simple, continuous, or perfect.

It _____ (be) late when Sara finally _____ (get) home. She _____ (be) exhausted because she _____ (work) a double shift. As she _____ (open) the door, she _____ (notice) that someone _____ (leave) a parcel on the step.

Part B – Order the Events

Rewrite as one sentence using the past perfect for the earlier event.

1. First he lost his job. Then he moved abroad. _____
2. First the film started. Then we arrived. _____
3. First she had read the book. Then she saw the film. _____

Part C – Correct the Sequence Error

#	Wrong sentence	Correction
1	When I arrived, the meeting already finished.	
2	She was knowing him for years before they married.	
3	By the time we got there, the shop closed.	

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Past Perfect Simple vs Continuous

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Reference: Result vs Activity in the Earlier Past

The **past perfect simple** (had done) focuses on a completed earlier action or its result; the **past perfect continuous** (had been doing) focuses on the duration or ongoing nature of an earlier activity, often explaining a later past situation.

Form	Emphasis	Example
Past perfect simple	completed / result	She **had written** ten pages.
Past perfect continuous	duration / activity	She **had been writing** for hours.
explains a past state	continuous	His eyes were red; he **had been crying**.
completed before past	simple	They **had left** by noon.

Part A – Simple or Continuous?

1. The ground was wet; it _____ (rain) all night.
2. By the end of the year, she _____ (save) enough for a car.
3. He was out of breath because he _____ (run).
4. They _____ (finish) the project before the deadline.

Part B – Explain the Difference

#	Pair	Difference in meaning
1	a) When I arrived, she had cooked dinner. b) …she had been cooking dinner.	
2	a) He had read the report. b) He had been reading the report.	
3	a) They had painted the house. b) They had been painting the house.	

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Analysis & Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Part A – Passage Analysis

By the time the rescue team arrived, the climbers had been missing for two days. Snow was still falling, and the wind had not dropped. They had set out in good weather, but a storm had closed in overnight, and they had lost the path. When the helicopter finally spotted them, they were sheltering behind a rock, exhausted but alive. They had been walking in circles for hours before they gave up and dug in.

1. Identify one example each of past simple, past continuous, past perfect simple, and past perfect continuous, and explain why each was used.
2. Why "had closed in" but "was still falling"? Explain the tense choice.
3. The passage uses "had been walking… before they gave up". Explain the sequence and the choice of the continuous.
4. Rewrite the first sentence without the past perfect. What is lost?

Part B – Extended Writing

Write 160–190 words: a narrative about a dramatic or memorable past event. You must include and underline: (1) all three main past tenses (simple, continuous, perfect); (2) at least one **past perfect continuous**; (3) at least two **time linkers** (by the time, when, after, before, as soon as); (4) a clear sequence of events.

#	Line
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

Three tenses: _____ / 3 Perfect cont.: _____ / 1 Linkers: _____ / 2 Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — B2 Level, Past Tenses

Worksheet 1 – Part A

1 had already left · 2 had lost · 3 had finished · 4 had never seen

Worksheet 1 – Part B

1 had finished / went · 2 felt / hadn't prepared · 3 arrived / had already cooked

Worksheet 2 – Part A

was / got / was / had worked (or had been working) / was opening (or opened) / noticed / had left

Worksheet 2 – Part B

1 After he had lost his job, he moved abroad. / He moved abroad after he had lost his job. · 2 The film had (already) started before/when we arrived. · 3 She had read the book before she saw the film.

Worksheet 2 – Part C

1 …the meeting had already finished. · 2 She had known him for years before they married. · 3 … the shop had closed.

Item 2: *know* is stative — use the past perfect simple (had known), not the continuous.

Worksheet 3 – Part A

1 had been raining · 2 had saved · 3 had been running · 4 had finished

Worksheet 3 – Part B (model)

1 a) dinner was ready (completed result); b) she was in the middle of cooking / it may not be finished. · 2 a) he finished it (result); b) emphasis on the activity/duration, maybe unfinished. · 3 a) the house was painted (done); b) they were engaged in painting, perhaps incomplete.

Worksheet 4 – Part A (model)

1 Past simple: "the helicopter spotted them" (main event); past continuous: "Snow was still falling" (background); past perfect simple: "a storm had closed in" (earlier event); past perfect continuous: "had been walking in circles" (earlier, extended activity). · 2 "had closed in" = a completed earlier event that changed the situation; "was still falling" = ongoing background at the narrative moment. · 3 The walking preceded and led up to the giving up; the continuous stresses the exhausting, prolonged nature of it before the past-simple event "gave up". · 4 Without the past perfect ("the climbers were missing for two days") the two-day period loses its "already completed before the arrival" framing and the sequence becomes less clear.

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Range of tenses	Simple, continuous, perfect all used correctly	0–5
Past perfect continuous	One clear, correct use	0–4
Sequencing & linkers	Two+ linkers; order clear	0–3
Task & length	160–190 words; coherent narrative	0–3