

Unit 40: VERBS & PAST TIME

Which do you use?

	SIMPLE?	CONTINUOUS?
Past?	He worked	He was working
Present perfect?	He has worked	He has been working
Past perfect?	He had worked	He had been working

1 *Simple formation* or *Continuous Formation*

a **Activities: did you finish them?**

YES

I **read** a book last night.
It was very exciting.

He **had studied** Arabic before, so
it was easy for him to understand.

The car is OK now. They **have repaired** it.

She **watched** TV last night.

IT IS NOT IMPORTANT or **NO**

I **was reading** a book. That's why
I missed the TV show.

He **had been studying** Arabic for four
years and he wanted to practice.

Their hands are dirty because they **have
been repairing** the car.

She **was watching** TV when the phone
rang.

b **States**

I **didn't know** anybody there.

They **liked** fruit more than anything else.

I **believed** all his stories.

NOT *I wasn't knowing*

NOT *They were liking*

NOT *I was believing*

You cannot decide to do these things and then stop. They are not actions, so we cannot use the continuous formation.

NOTICE: If you want to show clearly that the state is now finished, you can use **used to** (Unit 38). For example:

I **used to believe** all his stories, but now I know he's a liar.

I **didn't use to know** anybody there, but now I have lots of friends.

2 *Past simple* or *Present perfect simple*

a **Are we interested in exactly when?**

YES

NO

I **saw** the film yesterday.

Did you **go** to England on your holiday?

He **didn't do** his homework last night.

I've seen the film. It's good.

Have you ever **been** to England?

He **has not done** his homework yet.

b **Is it important for now?**

NO

I **broke** my leg, so I had to go to the hospital.

It **wasn't** a comfortable trip. I needed two days to recover from it.

Charles Dickens, the famous author, **died** at the age of fifty-eight.
(This is history.)

YES

Help! I think I've **broken** my leg.

It **hasn't been** a comfortable trip. I feel terrible.

Maria Jones, the famous singer, **has died** at the age of seventy-six.
(This is news.)

c **Can it happen again?**

NO

Shakespeare **wrote** many plays.
(He is dead now.)

YES

My friend Sam **has written** many plays.
(He may write more.)

NOTICE: I **was** in Toronto for three days.

I **have been** in Toronto for three days.

(finished)

(unfinished)

3 **Past perfect**

Use past perfect when it is important to show what happened first (Unit 26).