

## Unit 26: PAST PERFECT

This formation means ‘double past — a time before another time in the past’. We use the past tense of the auxiliary verb **have** (Unit 17) before the past participle (Unit 14). Don’t forget that many participles are irregular (Appendix 10).

### 1 Formation (*had + past participle*)

#### a STATEMENTS

**EXAMPLES:** They **had** all **worked** very hard that day.  
She **had gone** by air to save time.  
I **hadn’t put** the address at the top.

#### b QUESTIONS

**EXAMPLES:** **Had** you **seen** the man before?  
How much **had** he **taken**?

**NOTICE:** There is also a continuous formation. The past participle is **been** and the **-ing** form follows:

**EXAMPLES:** The weather **had been getting** worse all day.  
He **had not been** expecting me.  
**Had** they **been fighting**?

**NOTICE:** **Had** can be an **AUXILIARY** and a **LEXICAL** verb (Unit 3).

**EXAMPLE:** For three days, the men **had not had** any food.

### 2 Use

To give the situation or the background to a story that began in the past:

**EXAMPLES:** When we got to the coast, they all cried out in surprise. It was the first time they **had** ever **seen** the sea.  
We did not think we could win the match. Our best player **had broken** his leg in a car accident two days before.  
The teams **had been playing** for ten minutes when the rain began.

**NOTICE:** We can use the past perfect to show which happened first:

**EXAMPLES:** I tried to open the door but somebody **had locked** it from the other side.  
[First somebody locked it, then I tried to open it.]  
I tried to open the door but somebody **locked** it from the other side.  
[These two things happened at the same time.]