

# English Ladder

## Student Workbook

### Understanding the Past Perfect Tense: "Had" + Verb

A polished self-study handout designed for print or tablet use. Read the concept, notice the pattern, and then complete the matching practice set on your own.



Grammar Concepts #26

Key Points

Detailed Analysis and Practice Examples

Summary

#### Visual anchor

Use the concept poster to spotlight the main language pattern in **Understanding the Past Perfect Tense: "Had" + Verb** and keep the explanation visible during practice and discussion.

#### ENGLISH LADDER

### Concept #26 ► "Had" + Verb

We use **"had" plus a verb** when introducing **change or surprise**.

1. I **had been living** in New York before I moved to Tokyo.
2. I **had called him** "Tim" for a year before realizing his name was "Tom".
3. I **had met her only once** before asking her out to dinner.
4. The car window **had been left open**. (So it rained on the seats.)
5. I **had already invested much money** when the stock market crashed.
6. I **had sensed she was upset** even before learning her dog had died.
7. I **had been watching television** when the phone rang.
8. He **had expected to win** the race. (But He didn't.)

Sometimes the change or surprise is assumed, and not always included in the sentences. The word "had" permits us to guess the change.



The word "had" is often used in conditional sentences that start with an "if". These sentences introduce counterfactuals: events that could have happened, but didn't.

- If they **had left any later**, they would have missed the flight.
- If I **had only studied harder**, I would have passed the exam.



## Core Idea

The past perfect tense, formed using "had" plus a past participle (verb in its past participle form), is a critical aspect of English grammar. It is primarily used to express actions that were completed before another action or specific time in the past, introduce changes or surprises, and formulate conditional sentences about unreal past situations.

### Quick reference

#### 1. The Past Perfect for Sequence of Events

Example: I had been living in New York before I moved to Tokyo. Explanation: The past perfect tense ("had been living") shows that the action of living in New York was completed before the subsequent action of moving to Tokyo.

#### 1. The Past Perfect for Sequence of Events

She had finished her homework before she went out to play. The completion of homework preceded going out to play.

#### 2. The Past Perfect to Introduce Change or Surprise

Example: The car window had been left open. (So it rained on the seats.) Explanation: The past perfect tense ("had been left open") highlights the prior state of the car window, leading to the unexpected result of rain on the seats.

#### 2. The Past Perfect to Introduce Change or Surprise

I had sensed she was upset even before learning her dog had died. Sensing her upset occurred before discovering the reason.

#### 3. The Past Perfect in Conditional Sentences

Example: If they had left any later, they would have missed the flight. Explanation: The past perfect tense ("had left") is used to discuss a hypothetical situation that didn't occur. The consequence ("would have missed the flight") hinges on this unreal condition.

#### 3. The Past Perfect in Conditional Sentences

If I had only studied harder, I would have passed the exam. The unreal past condition (studying harder) did not happen, but the potential consequence (passing the exam) is discussed.

## Key Points

### 1. The Past Perfect for Sequence of Events

Purpose: To show that one past action was completed before another past action or specific time.



- Example: I had been living in New York before I moved to Tokyo. Explanation: The past perfect tense ("had been living") shows that the action of living in New York was completed before the subsequent action of moving to Tokyo.

More Examples:

- She had finished her homework before she went out to play. The completion of homework preceded going out to play.
- They had eaten dinner before the guests arrived. Eating dinner happened before the guests' arrival.
- I had never seen such a beautiful sunset before I traveled to Hawaii. The speaker's first experience of a beautiful sunset occurred before traveling to Hawaii.
- By the time he got to the station, the train had already left. The train's departure occurred before his arrival at the station.

## 2. The Past Perfect to Introduce Change or Surprise

Purpose: To emphasize that a previous action or state led to an unexpected or significant result.

- Example: The car window had been left open. (So it rained on the seats.) Explanation: The past perfect tense ("had been left open") highlights the prior state of the car window, leading to the unexpected result of rain on the seats.

More Examples:

- I had sensed she was upset even before learning her dog had died. Sensing her upset occurred before discovering the reason.
- I had been watching television when the phone rang. The ongoing action of watching TV was interrupted by the phone call.
- He had expected to win the race. (But he didn't.) The past expectation was not met by the actual outcome.
- I had bought a gift for her before she told me she couldn't come to the party. The action of buying a gift happened before the surprise of her not attending.

## 3. The Past Perfect in Conditional Sentences

Purpose: To describe unreal past conditions and their possible consequences. These sentences often start with "if" and discuss hypothetical scenarios.

- Example: If they had left any later, they would have missed the flight. Explanation: The past perfect tense ("had left") is used to discuss a hypothetical situation that didn't occur. The consequence ("would have missed the flight") hinges on this unreal condition.

More Examples:

- If I had only studied harder, I would have passed the exam. The unreal past condition (studying harder) did not happen, but the potential consequence (passing the exam) is discussed.



- If she had known about the meeting, she would have attended. Knowing about the meeting is an unreal past condition, and attending is the hypothetical result.
- If we had booked earlier, we would have gotten better seats. Booking earlier is the unreal past condition, and getting better seats is the hypothetical consequence.
- If they had called me, I would have joined them for dinner. The hypothetical past action (calling) and its possible result (joining for dinner) are discussed.

## Detailed Analysis and Practice Examples

### A. Sequence of Events

- Past Perfect: I had met her only once before asking her out to dinner. Analysis: Meeting her occurred before asking her out, emphasizing the prior action with "had met."
- Past Perfect: He had already invested much money when the stock market crashed. Analysis: Investing money happened before the stock market crash, using "had already invested" to indicate the prior action.
- Past Perfect: She had already left by the time I arrived. Analysis: The action of leaving occurred before the arrival.

### B. Change or Surprise

- Past Perfect: I had packed the bags before the trip was canceled. Analysis: The action of packing the bags was completed before the unexpected cancellation of the trip.
- Past Perfect: The document had been saved before the computer crashed. (So the data was not lost.) Analysis: Saving the document occurred before the crash, preventing data loss due to the prior action.
- Past Perfect: I had never tried sushi before moving to Japan. Analysis: The first experience of trying sushi occurred after moving to Japan, with "had never tried" indicating the prior state.

### C. Conditional Sentences

- Past Perfect: If he had studied more, he would have passed the exam. Analysis: The unreal past condition (studying more) and its potential consequence (passing the exam) are discussed.
- Past Perfect: If they had arrived earlier, they would have seen the beginning of the movie. Analysis: Arriving earlier is an unreal past condition with the hypothetical consequence of seeing the movie's beginning.
- Past Perfect: If I had known about the sale, I would have bought the dress. Analysis: Knowing about the sale is the unreal past condition, and buying the dress is the hypothetical result.

## Summary



The past perfect tense ("had" + past participle) is essential for describing actions completed before another past action or time, introducing changes or surprises, and forming conditional sentences about unreal past situations. Mastering this tense will enhance your ability to narrate sequences, emphasize significant results, and discuss hypothetical past scenarios accurately.



## Practice Check

Decide which of the two rephrasings, a) or b), matches the meaning of the sentence.

### ITEM 01

**I had been living in New York before I moved to Tokyo.**

- a) I lived in New York after moving to Tokyo.
- b) I lived in New York, then I moved to Tokyo.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

### ITEM 02

**I had called him "Tim" for a year before realizing his name was "Tom".**

- a) I realized his name was Tom after calling him Tim for a year.
- b) I called him Tom before realizing his name was Tim.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

### ITEM 03

**I had met her only once before asking her out to dinner.**

- a) I met her after asking her out to dinner.
- b) I met her once, then I asked her out to dinner.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

### ITEM 04

**The car window had been left open. (So it rained on the seats.)**

- a) The car window was open before it rained on the seats.
- b) The car window was closed before it rained on the seats.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 05**

**I had already invested much money when the stock market crashed.**

- a) I invested money after the stock market crashed.
- b) I invested money before the stock market crashed.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 06**

**I had sensed she was upset even before learning her dog had died.**

- a) I sensed she was upset before learning about her dog's death.
- b) I sensed she was upset after learning about her dog's death.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 07**

**I had been watching television when the phone rang.**

- a) I was watching television before the phone rang.
- b) I was watching television after the phone rang.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 08**

**He had expected to win the race. (But he didn't.)**

- a) He expected to win the race, but he did not win.
- b) He did not expect to win the race, and he did not win.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 09**

**The document had been saved before the computer crashed. (So the data was not lost.)**

- a) The document was saved after the computer crashed.
- b) The document was saved before the computer crashed.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 10**

**If I had known about the sale, I would have bought the dress.**

- a) I knew about the sale and bought the dress.
- b) I did not know about the sale, so I did not buy the dress.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 11**

**If they had left any later, they would have missed the flight.**

- a) They left on time and caught the flight.
- b) They left late and missed the flight.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 12**

**If I had only studied harder, I would have passed the exam.**

- a) I did not study hard enough, so I did not pass the exam.
- b) I studied hard and passed the exam.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 13**

**If she had known about the meeting, she would have attended.**

- a) She did not know about the meeting, so she did not attend.
  - b) She knew about the meeting and attended.
- 

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 14**

**If we had booked earlier, we would have gotten better seats.**

- a) We did not book earlier, so we did not get better seats.
  - b) We booked earlier and got better seats.
- 

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 15**

**If they had arrived earlier, they would have seen the beginning of the movie.**

- a) They did not arrive earlier, so they missed the beginning of the movie.
  - b) They arrived earlier and saw the beginning of the movie.
- 

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 16**

**I had packed the bags before the trip was canceled.**

- a) The bags were packed after the trip was canceled.
  - b) The bags were packed before the trip was canceled.
- 

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 17**

**She had already left by the time I arrived.**

- a) She left before I arrived.
- b) She left after I arrived.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 18**

**The car window had been left open. (So it rained on the seats.)**

- a) The car window was open before it rained on the seats.
- b) The car window was closed before it rained on the seats.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 19**

**I had been living in New York before I moved to Tokyo.**

- a) I lived in New York after moving to Tokyo.
- b) I lived in New York, then I moved to Tokyo.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 20**

**I had already invested much money when the stock market crashed.**

- a) I invested money after the stock market crashed.
- b) I invested money before the stock market crashed.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 21**

**If he had studied more, he would have passed the exam.**

- a) He did not study enough, so he did not pass the exam.
- b) He studied enough and passed the exam.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 22**

**She had already left by the time I arrived.**

- a) She left before I arrived.
- b) She left after I arrived.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 23**

**If I had only studied harder, I would have passed the exam.**

- a) I did not study hard enough, so I did not pass the exam.
- b) I studied hard and passed the exam.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 24**

**The document had been saved before the computer crashed. (So the data was not lost.)**

- a) The document was saved after the computer crashed.
- b) The document was saved before the computer crashed.

Correct choice: \_\_\_\_\_



## Self-check Answer Key

Use the key after you have completed every item on your own.

**ITEM 01**

Correct answer: b

**ITEM 02**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 03**

Correct answer: b

**ITEM 04**

The car window had been left open. Correct answer: a

**ITEM 05**

Correct answer: b

**ITEM 06**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 07**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 08**

He had expected to win the race. Correct answer: a

**ITEM 09**

The document had been saved before the computer crashed. Correct answer: b

**ITEM 10**

Correct answer: b

**ITEM 11**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 12**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 13**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 14**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 15**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 16**

Correct answer: b

**ITEM 17**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 18**

The car window had been left open. Correct answer: a

**ITEM 19**

Correct answer: b

**ITEM 20**

Correct answer: b

**ITEM 21**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 22**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 23**

Correct answer: a

**ITEM 24**

The document had been saved before the computer crashed. Correct answer: b