RECOUNTING THE PAST

Recounting a story, incident or event is to write or talk about something, which has happened in the past.

It may be an event from your life (personal recount), a narrative, biography, diary entry or another form of description.

When describing events which have already occurred in the past, it is necessary to use past tense verbs and time expressions/words which order past events or refer to points of time in the past.

STUDY TIPS

When recounting in the past whether it writing a biography or describing a sequence of events for example, it is important to establish clearly the relationship between different past actions.

The past perfect focuses on a specific past time first and then refers back to an action, event or situation that occurred before that time.

Simple Past and Past Perfect Tenses

These notes compare simple past and past perfect use, and focus on time expressions in relation to the order or sequence of past actions, events, or situations.

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Simple Past	
Forms	**Examples**
Regular Simple Past	Add **-d** or **-ed** to the infinitive: decid**ed**, watch**ed**, stud**ied**
Questions or Negative	auxiliary **did** [not] + infinitive: **Did** you watch the documentary? No, I **didn't** watch it.
Irregular	be - was/were, dream - dreamed/dreamt, find – found, have – had, know – knew, leave – left, make – made, read – read, seek – sought, speak – spoke, strike – struck, swim – swam, teach – taught, understand – understood, write - wrote
Use	**Examples**
▪ actions that occurred at a specific time in the past; the action is completed from start to finish	It **was** evident from the report that company profits **increased** substantially.
▪ habitual past action; it happened for a period of time in the past	I **lived** and **worked** in Sydney for two years.
Expressions Referring to points of time in the past	**Examples**
▪ prepositions: at, in, on	Profits **decreased in** the first quarter.
▪ yesterday, yesterday morning, yesterday evening, last month, before last, ago, earlier, in the past	They **cancelled** classes **yesterday morning**. Interest rates **rose last week**. I **saw** him in class **the day before last**. John **completed** his studies **two years ago**. **In the past**, life was much simpler.
Time Clauses Order or Sequence of Past Events	**Pattern** ▪ **time clause** can occur **before** or **after** the **main clause** or ▪ **time clause** [past tense]**,** + **main clause** (if the clause contains new information) [past tense] ▪ **main clause** [past tense] + **time clause** [past tense]
▪ as soon as	It **started** to rain **as soon as** he **arrived** at his destination.
▪ before	**Before** he **arrived** at the school**,** John **rang** his colleagues.
▪ after	**After** he **got** his results**,** he **enrolled** on the course.
▪ when	**When** John **got to** his seat**,** the film **began**.
▪ until	John **waited until** everyone **left** the cinema.
▪ once	**Once** John **finished** his exam**,** he **relaxed** for the rest of the day.

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Past Perfect	
Forms	**Examples**
Statement	auxiliary **had** + **past participle**: had decided, had given, had taught
Questions or Negative	auxiliary **had** [not] + **past participle**: **Had** he **taught** the course? No, he **hadn't taught** it.
Use	**Examples**
▪ two actions occurring in the past which are connected – the earlier action uses the past perfect, while the later takes the simple past	She **passed** her final exams because she **had worked** hard throughout the year.
Time Phrases/ Clauses	**Pattern**

▪ action of the main clause is finished before the action of the time clause	_time clause/phrase_ _main clause_
	 When S + V [**simple past**], S + V [**past perfect**]
	 by + **a specific time**
	
	                             or
	
	 main clause _time clause/phrase_
	 S + V [**past perfect**] **when** S + V [**simple past**],
	                          by + **a specific time**

Time expressions	**Examples**
▪ when	**When** I **arrived** for class**,** the lesson **had started**.
▪ by + a specific time	**By two o'clock**, the candidates **had completed** the IELTS test.
▪ by then ▪ by the time + simple past	I got to the station at two o'clock, but everyone **had left by then**. **By the time** I **got** to the station, everyone **had left**.