Past perfect examples

The past perfect shows that an event in the past happened **before** another event in the past.

Example sentences



(1) Lisa **couldn't** pay. She **had forgotten** her purse.
(2) When Peter **arrived**, Sue **had already left** the bar.



▶ The past perfect is used to say that one past action followed another. The action in the past perfect happened earlier.

Example sentences



(3) She **had known** him for years when he **told** her that he was gay.
(4) When I **visited** John in the hospital, he **had been there** for three months.



▶ We can also use the past perfect to speak about a state (Zustand) that began before a point of time in the past and lasted up to that point of time.

Comparison: past tense ⟷ past perfect

Example sentence



(5) When Roy's girlfriend **arrived** he **had cooked** the dinner.



▶ The dinner is ready when she arrives.

An event in the past perfect happened earlier than the events in the past tense.

Example sentence

(6) When Roy’s girlfriend **arrived** he **cooked** the dinner.

▶ He starts cooking the dinner *after* she arrives.

Several (mehrere) events in the past tense are seen as a sequence of events (Abfolge von Ereignissen) in the past (and happened in the order in which they are named in the text). This is especially common in stories etc.

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