

OVERVIEW OF PAST TENSES

What past tenses do you
know?

Past Simple

Past
Continuous

Past
Perfect

Past
Perfect
Continuous

PAST SIMPLE

- She wrote the letter, put a stamp on it and posted it.
- Past actions which happened one after the other.
- She called an hour ago.
- Complete action or event which happened at a state past time
- Shakespeare wrote a lot of plays.
- Action which happened at a definite time although the time isn't mentioned. This action isn't connected with the present.



PAST CONTINUOUS

- He was playing tennis at 4.30 yesterday.
- Action in the middle of happening at a stated past time
- While I was getting dressed the bell rang.
- Past action in progress interrupting by another past action
- While I was sunbathing Tim was swimming.
- Two or more contemporary past actions



PAST PERFECT

- He had left by the time I got there. (or by 8 p.m.)
- She was sad because she had failed the test.
- He couldn't find his watch, he had lost it.
- Past action which occurred before another action or before a stated past time
- Complete past action which had visible result in the past
- As the past equivalent of the Present Perfect



PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

- She had been working as a clerk for 10 years before she retired.

- They were wet because they had been walking in the rain.

- She went to the doctor. Her leg had been aching for 2 days.

- Action continuing over a period up to a specific time in the past

- Past action of certain duration which had visible results in the past

- As the past equivalent of Present Perfect Continuous

