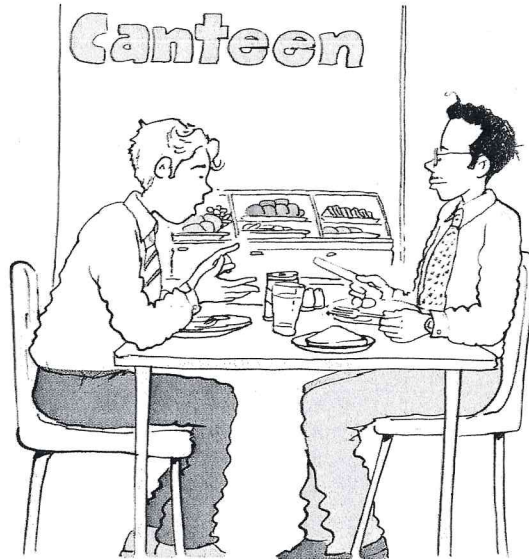


18 Past Perfect

1 Introduction

IN THE CANTEEN AT WORK, MARK IS TELLING A COLLEAGUE ABOUT THE DREADFUL DAY HE HAD YESTERDAY.



*I felt really tired when I took the train to work yesterday because Sarah and I **had been** to a party the evening before. We **hadn't gone** to bed until after one. I **hadn't been** on the train long when I had a bit of a shock. I suddenly realized that I'd **left** my wallet at home. Then I began to wonder. **Had I left** it in the office the day before? I just couldn't remember. I wanted to go back to bed. I felt awful.*

The situation is in the past (*I took the train ... I felt tired ...*). When we talk about things before this past time, we use the Past Perfect.

*Sarah and I **had been** to a party the evening before.*

*I'd **left** my wallet at home.*

We are looking back from the situation of the train journey to the earlier actions – going to a party and leaving home without the wallet.

Here are some more examples of the Past Perfect.

*It was twenty to six. Most of the shops **had just closed**.*

*I went to the box office at lunch-time, but they **had already sold** all the tickets.*

*By 1960 most of Britain's old colonies **had become** independent.*

As well as actions, we can use the Past Perfect to talk about states.

*I felt better by the summer, but the doctor warned me not to do too much. I'd **been** very ill.*

*The news came as no surprise to me. I'd **known** for some time that the factory was likely to close.*

2 Form

The Past Perfect is **had** + a past participle.

*He **had enjoyed** the party. OR He'd **enjoyed** the party.*

*They **hadn't gone** to bed until late. Where **had** he **put** his wallet?*

For irregular past participles see page 383.

3 Present Perfect and Past Perfect

Compare these examples.

PRESENT PERFECT (before now)

*My wallet **isn't** here. I've **left** it behind.*

*The match is over. United **have won**.*

*That man looks familiar. I've **seen** him somewhere before.*

PAST PERFECT (before then)

*My wallet **wasn't** there. I'd **left** it behind.*

*The match **was** over. United **had won**.*

*The man **looked** familiar. I'd **seen** him somewhere before.*

▷ 19 Review of the Past Simple, Continuous and Perfect ▷ 20 The Past Perfect Continuous