We use the **Past Perfect** for something that started in the past and continued **up to a given time in the past**.

![Diagram showing the use of Past Perfect with a time line](https://situationalenglish.blogspot.com/2015/05/upotreblenie-past-perfect.html)

**Negative sentences**

To make negative statements in the Past Perfect, we use:

**had not (hadn’t) + Past Participle**

This is often used to explain or give a reason for something in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I hadn't left</em></td>
<td><em>We hadn't left</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>You hadn’t left</em></td>
<td><em>You hadn’t left</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>He/she/it hadn’t left</em></td>
<td><em>They hadn’t left</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Nick **hadn’t attended** our meeting, so we discussed everything without him.
- I **hadn’t read** the play before I went to the theater to see it.
- They were so excited. They **hadn’t danced** together since 2014.
Questions in Past Perfect

We use **Past Perfect** tense to ask and answer questions about actions that took place before a certain moment or another action in the past.

![Past Perfect Tense Diagram](https://www.learnathome.ru/grammar/past-perfect-tense.html)

**had** + Past Participle


To make questions in the Past Perfect, we put ‘**had**’ before the subject and add the Past Participle form of the verb:

- **Had** they **arrived** in New York before it got dark?

**Yes/No questions**

To create a question that will be answered with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, use ‘**Had**’ (or ‘**Hadn’t**’ for a negative question) + Past Participle form of the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had I seen?</td>
<td>Had we seen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had you seen?</td>
<td>Had you seen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had he/she/it seen?</td>
<td>Had they seen?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Had** you **seen** Helen playing squash with Nicole before the rain started?
- **Had** he **made** any mistakes before the teacher asked him to hand in the test?
• You looked pale. Had anybody scared you?

Note: In short positive answers to the Past Perfect questions we use only full forms of ‘had’. In short negative answers we can also use short forms of ‘had’.

• Had you made your homework before the movie started?
  • Yes, I had (No, I hadn’t).

• Had he already finished cleaning when you came in?
  • Yes, he had (No, he hadn’t).

Special questions

Special questions (also known as wh-questions) are questions that require more information in their answers. They are made using wh- words such as what, where, when, why, which, who, how, how many, how much.

To make a special question, use the same word order as with yes-no questions but put a wh-word before the verb ‘had’. The structure is:

wh-word + had + [subject] + Past Participle

• How had she washed clothes before the light went off?
• Why had Roy gone to America?
• How much had she studied before the exam?
• How many cups of coffee had he drunk before the interview?

See also:

Past Perfect: Statements

Present Perfect or Past Perfect?