



Past Perfect: Past Simple vs Past Perfect

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- When I ____ (arrive), the meeting ____ (already/start).
a) had arrived ... already started
b) arrived ... already started
c) arrived ... had already started
d) had arrived ... had already started
- She ____ (be) tired because she ____ (not/sleep) well.
a) was ... didn't sleep
b) was ... hadn't slept
c) had been ... hadn't slept
d) had been ... didn't sleep
- I ____ (not/recognise) him because he ____ (grow) a beard.
a) didn't recognise ... grew
b) didn't recognise ... had grown
c) hadn't recognised ... grew
d) hadn't recognised ... had grown
- They ____ (watch) a film that evening. Earlier, they ____ (finish) dinner at a restaurant.
a) watched ... had finished
b) had watched ... finished
c) watched ... finished
d) were watching ... had finished
- The children ____ (go) to bed. They ____ (already/do) their homework earlier that evening.
a) went ... had already done
b) went ... already did
c) had gone ... already did
d) were going ... had already done
- I ____ (tell) her the news, but she ____ (already/hear) it.
a) told ... had already heard
b) had told ... already heard
c) told ... already heard
d) had told ... had already heard
- By the time I ____ (get) to the stop, the bus ____ (already/leave).
a) got ... had already left
b) got ... already left
c) had got ... already left
d) was getting ... had already left
- He ____ (pass) the exam easily. He ____ (study) the material thoroughly in the weeks before.
a) passed ... had studied
b) passed ... studied
c) had passed ... studied
d) passed ... was studying
- When we ____ (check) our bags, we ____ (realise) we ____ (forget) the camera.
a) had checked ... realised ... forgot
b) checked ... had realised ... forgot
c) checked ... realised ... forgot
d) checked ... realised ... had forgotten
- I ____ (never/hear) of that band before my friend ____ (mention) them.
a) had never heard ... had mentioned
b) never heard ... had mentioned
c) had never heard ... mentioned
d) never heard ... mentioned
- She was devastated. She ____ (lose) the ring that her grandmother ____ (give) her years before she passed away.
a) had lost ... gave
b) lost ... had given
c) had lost ... had given
d) lost ... gave

12. By the time the doctor ____ (arrive), the patient ____ (die).
 a) arrived ... had died
 b) arrived ... died
 c) had arrived ... had died
 d) had arrived ... died
13. I ____ (be) hungry because I ____ (not/eat) since morning.
 a) had been ... didn't eat
 b) was ... didn't eat
 c) was ... hadn't eaten
 d) had been ... hadn't eaten
14. They ____ (decide) to divorce. They ____ (be) married for twenty years and had grown apart.
 a) decided ... had been
 b) decided ... were
 c) had decided ... were
 d) decided ... have been
15. The teacher ____ (ask) a question that we ____ (not/study).
 a) had asked ... didn't study
 b) had asked ... hadn't studied
 c) asked ... hadn't studied
 d) asked ... didn't study
16. I ____ (can't) find my keys because I ____ (put) them in the wrong pocket.
 a) can't ... put
 b) couldn't ... had put
 c) can't ... had put
 d) couldn't ... put
17. We ____ (know) exactly what to order because we ____ (eat) there many times before.
 a) knew ... had eaten
 b) knew ... ate
 c) had known ... ate
 d) knew ... were eating
18. She ____ (thank) me for the gift. I ____ (send) it weeks earlier, and she had just received it.
 a) thanked ... had sent
 b) thanked ... sent
 c) had thanked ... sent
 d) thanked ... was sending
19. The film ____ (start) by the time we ____ (find) our seats.
 a) started ... found
 b) started ... had found
 c) had started ... had found
 d) had started ... found
20. He ____ (not/want) to see the film because he ____ (already/read) the book.
 a) didn't want ... had already read
 b) didn't want ... already read
 c) hadn't wanted ... already read
 d) didn't want ... was already reading



Answers

1. c) arrived ... had already started
2. b) was ... hadn't slept
3. b) didn't recognise ... had grown
4. a) watched ... had finished
5. a) went ... had already done
6. a) told ... had already heard
7. a) got ... had already left
8. a) passed ... had studied
9. d) checked ... realised ... had forgotten
10. c) had never heard ... mentioned
11. b) lost ... had given
12. a) arrived ... had died
13. c) was ... hadn't eaten
14. a) decided ... had been
15. c) asked ... hadn't studied
16. b) couldn't ... had put
17. a) knew ... had eaten
18. a) thanked ... had sent
19. d) had started ... found
20. a) didn't want ... had already read



Explanations

- 1. “arrived ... had already started” (c)**
Use Past Simple for the main event (arrive). Use Past Perfect for the earlier action (start). The meeting started before I arrived.
- 2. “was ... hadn't slept” (b)**
Past Simple 'was' describes her state. Past Perfect 'hadn't slept' explains the earlier cause.
- 3. “didn't recognise ... had grown” (b)**
Growing the beard happened before I saw him, so use Past Perfect. Not recognising is the main past event.
- 4. “watched ... had finished” (a)**
Watching the film is the main past event (Past Simple). 'Earlier' signals that finishing dinner happened before — use Past Perfect 'had finished' for the earlier action.
- 5. “went ... had already done” (a)**
Going to bed is the main past event (Past Simple). 'Earlier that evening' plus 'already' forces Past Perfect — the homework was completed before bedtime.
- 6. “told ... had already heard” (a)**
I told her (Past Simple main event). She heard before I told her (Past Perfect earlier event).
- 7. “got ... had already left” (a)**
'By the time' + Past Simple requires Past Perfect for the earlier action. The bus had already left before I arrived at the stop.
- 8. “passed ... had studied” (a)**
Passing the exam is the main past event (Past Simple). 'In the weeks before' explicitly places studying earlier, requiring Past Perfect 'had studied'.
- 9. “checked ... realised ... had forgotten” (d)**
Checking and realising are the main past sequence. Forgetting happened earlier (before we checked).
- 10. “had never heard ... mentioned” (c)**
No experience of the band (Past Perfect) until the mention (Past Simple).
- 11. “lost ... had given” (b)**
Losing is the main past event (Past Simple). 'Years before she passed away' anchors the giving firmly in an earlier time, requiring Past Perfect 'had given'. The giving happened long before both the losing and the passing away.
- 12. “arrived ... had died” (a)**
'By the time' + Past Simple, Past Perfect. The death happened before the doctor arrived.
- 13. “was ... hadn't eaten” (c)**
Being hungry (Past Simple) resulted from not eating earlier (Past Perfect).
- 14. “decided ... had been” (a)**
Deciding is the main past event (Past Simple). The twenty years of marriage happened over a period before the decision, requiring Past Perfect 'had been'. 'Had grown apart' in the same sentence confirms the Past Perfect pattern.

15. “asked ... hadn't studied” (c)

We hadn't studied the topic before the teacher asked (Past Simple main event).

16. “couldn't ... had put” (b)

Putting them in the wrong pocket happened earlier (Past Perfect). Not finding is the main past event.

17. “knew ... had eaten” (a)

Knowing what to order is the main past state (Past Simple 'knew'). Eating there many times before is the earlier experience that explains the knowledge, requiring Past Perfect 'had eaten'.

18. “thanked ... had sent” (a)

Thanking is the main past event (Past Simple). 'Weeks earlier' explicitly anchors the sending in the past before the thanking, requiring Past Perfect 'had sent'.

19. “had started ... found” (d)

The film starting (Past Perfect) happened before finding seats (Past Simple).

20. “didn't want ... had already read” (a)

Not wanting is the main past state (Past Simple). 'Already' with Past Perfect 'had already read' emphasises that reading the book was completed before and caused the reluctance.