

Unit 5

TENSE: Conditional Perfect

TIME: Refers to an uncompleted action

KEY PHRASE: "Would have"

STRUCTURE: Compound tense: "haber" in the conditional + past participle

The Conditional Perfect

Of all the tenses, the conditional perfect holds the dubious honor of being the only one to express no action. It is the favorite tense of excuse makers. The conditional perfect is used to refer to an action that *would have* taken place, but did not because something got in the way or some specified condition was not met.

In any sentence containing the conditional perfect, there will always be an "if" or a "but" lurking about, either stated or implied. People whose verbiage contains a good deal of conditional perfect sentences most likely are those who don't get a lot done and have loads of excuses for all that they don't do, for example:

I *would have paid* you, but I couldn't find my checkbook.

If it weren't so difficult, I *would have baked* you a pie.

The conditional perfect also can express probability or conjecture with regard to an action in the remote past (*Where do you suppose they had been?*) or time (*It must have been three o'clock when he arrived*).

Formation of the Conditional Perfect

The conditional perfect is a compound tense, which means that an auxiliary verb is required before the main verb. The auxiliary verb **haber** is conjugated in the conditional tense and followed by the past participle of the main verb:

habría + past participle habrías + past participle habría + past participle	habríamos + past participle habríais + past participle habrían + past participle
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Uses of the Conditional Perfect

1. Expresses what *would have* happened: The conditional perfect expresses an action that *would have* taken place, but did not. In such sentences it is important to note that when the dependent clause is introduced with "but," the verb in that clause will be in the indicative:

Él habría trabajado, **pero estaba cansado.** Yo habría comido, **pero no tenía hambre.**
 He would have worked, *but he was tired.* I would have eaten, *but I wasn't hungry.*

When the dependent clause is introduced with "if," the verb in that clause will be in the imperfect subjunctive:

Él habría trabajado **si no estuviera cansado.** Yo habría comido **si tuviera hambre.**
 He would have worked *if he weren't tired.* I would have eaten *if I were hungry.*

ejercicio

III-5-1

1. I would have called you, but my telephone doesn't work (*funcionar*). _____

2. He would have gone to the movies with us, but he had a headache. _____

3. Would you have told me the answer if you knew it? _____
4. We would have given you a bigger piece (*el pedazo*) of cake if you weren't on a diet (*estar a dieta*).

5. Sherlock Holmes is the only person who would have known who stole (*robar*) the diamonds.

6. He would have hired (*contratar*) me if I spoke Spanish. _____

7. Would you (*pl. fam.*) have gone to the beach if it weren't raining? _____

8. We would have invited the Joneses, but the last time they were here they got sick (*enfermarse*).

9. What would you have done if you didn't have your credit card (*la tarjeta de crédito*)? _____

10. I would have bought the dress if it were one size (*la talla*) smaller. _____

11. If she weren't so selfish (*egoista*), she would have helped you. _____

12. I would have gone on a diet (*ponerse a dieta*), but I don't have any willpower (*la voluntad*). _____

13. I would have made dinner, but I was in a bad mood (*estar de mal humor*). _____

14. He would have changed the lightbulb, but there was no one to turn (*girar*) the ladder (*la escalera*).

15. He would have turned in (*entregar*) his assignment (*la tarea*), but the dog ate it. _____

2. Expresses conjecture: The conditional perfect also expresses probability or conjecture with regard to:

1. An action in the (relatively) remote past, e.g.:

¿Adónde **habrían ido**? Él lo **habría visto**.
Where do you think *they had gone*? I suppose he *had seen* it.

In a question, the "do you think?" aspect is understood, as is the speaker's "I suppose" in a statement.

2. The (clock) time or reference to a date of a specific action, e.g.:

Habría sido la una cuando él llegó. <i>It must have been</i> one o'clock when he arrived.	Habrían sido las dos cuando me dormí. <i>It must have been</i> two when I fell asleep.
Habría sido febrero cuando nació Fido. <i>It must have been</i> February when Fido was born.	Habría sido el domingo pasado cuando se cayó. <i>It must have been</i> last Sunday when he fell.

ejercicio

III-5-2

1. I suppose I had worn the ring only two or three times before the robbery (*el robo*). _____

2. Where do you suppose she had hidden (*esconder*) the money? _____

3. It must have been one o'clock in the morning when the telephone rang (*sonar*). _____

4. It must have been July or August when I met you because it was very hot. _____

5. I suppose they'd never met anyone like you. _____
6. It must have been November when I bought this because I remember that there were turkeys (*el pavo*) everywhere (*en todas partes*). _____

7. Do you suppose they had lied to us? _____
8. It must have been a Tuesday when we met because that day everybody was voting. _____

9. It must have been February when I received this letter because there was a valentine in the envelope.

10. I don't suppose they had studied very much. _____
11. It must have been four in the morning when Barbie returned from her date (*la cita*) with Ken.

12. It must have been the Fourth of July because I had on (*tener puesto*) a red, white, and blue T-shirt (*la camiseta*). _____

13. It must have been a holiday (*el día de fiesta*) because the post office (*la oficina de correos*) was closed.

14. Who do you suppose had left (*dejar*) those shoes on the highway (*la carretera*)? _____

15. Why do you suppose Peter had put his wife inside a pumpkin (*la calabaza*)? _____
