

## Unit 6

**TENSE:** Past Perfect

**TIME:** Refers to the remote past; refers to actions which occurred prior to a specific point in time

**KEY PHRASE:** "Had"  
(I *had* traveled; We *had* studied)

**STRUCTURE:** Compound tense: *haber*, conjugated in the imperfect + past participle

# The Past Perfect Tense

The past perfect tense is a compound tense, which means that it requires an auxiliary verb, followed by a past participle. We form the past perfect tense in the same manner in English, using for all persons the auxiliary "had," as in "You *had* written the letter"; "She *had* bought three suits."

We use the past perfect tense (sometimes called the pluperfect tense) when referring to an action which occurred prior to something else. When using this tense there is always a stated or implied cut-off point. Consider the following sentence:

*I had taken three pictures before realizing that there wasn't any film in the camera.*

The action, taking pictures, stopped at the cut-off point of discovering that there wasn't any film. The act of taking pictures, in a sense, is hidden behind the discovery. In this sense there is always something that stops the action referred to in the past perfect.

The past perfect differs from the present perfect in that sentences in the latter are still true: the cut-off point is *now*. In the past perfect, the cut-off point is some time in the past.

### Formation of the Past Perfect Tense

Because the past perfect tense is a compound tense, you will be working with an auxiliary verb and a past participle. To form verbs in this tense you first conjugate **haber** in the imperfect tense:

había	habíamos
habías	habíais
había	habían

Note that the first and third person singular forms are identical.

The formation of the past perfect is identical to that of the present perfect, except that the conjugation of **haber**, the auxiliary verb, is in the imperfect. The conjugated form of **haber** is then followed by the past participle of the desired verb.

## Regular Past Participles

The patterns for regularly formed past participles can be found in the preceding unit that deals with the present perfect.

*examples:*

Yo **había preparado** la cena.  
I *had prepared* dinner.

**Habías estado** aquí.  
You *had been* here.

Él **no había visitado** a mi tío.  
He *hadn't visited* my uncle.

**No habíamos probado** ese método.  
We *hadn't tried* that method.

**Habíais trabajado** duro.  
You *had worked* hard.

¿**Se habían acostado?**  
*Had they gone to bed?*

The following examples include the cut-off point. **Remember:** After a preposition the verb is not conjugated.

Yo **había comido** antes de llamarte.  
I *had eaten* before calling you.

¿**Te habías lavado** las manos antes de comer?  
*Had you washed* your hands before eating?

Él **no había cerrado** la puerta antes de salir.  
He *hadn't closed* the door before leaving.

**No habíamos escuchado** los discos hasta el martes.  
We *hadn't listened* to the records until Tuesday.

**Habíais conocido** a Jorge antes de la fiesta, ¿no?  
You *had met* George before the party, right?

Ellos **no habían manejado** el coche antes de comprarlo.  
They *hadn't driven* the car before buying it.

### Para ti, ¿cuál es verdadero o falso?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Antes de comenzar este ejercicio, yo había conseguido una pluma.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Antes de ducharme esta mañana, me había cepillado los dientes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Antes de comprar este libro, yo nunca había estudiado español.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Antes de acostarme anoche, había apagado todas las luces en la casa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Antes de graduarme de la escuela secundaria, había conseguido trabajo para el verano.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Me había lavado las manos antes de almorzar ayer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Yo había aprendido a nadar antes de cumplir seis años.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Antes de mi trabajo actual (*present*), había trabajado en un banco.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Antes de tener una bicicleta, yo había montado en triciclo.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Yo había volado en un avión antes de cumplir tres años.

## ejercicio

## II-6-1

1. I had paid. \_\_\_\_\_
2. She had lived in Texas. \_\_\_\_\_
3. They had lost all the letters. \_\_\_\_\_
4. We hadn't received an invitation. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Had you worn those shoes before the wedding? \_\_\_\_\_
6. I had eaten all the candy before discovering the prize. \_\_\_\_\_
7. We had practiced for four hours before the concert. \_\_\_\_\_
8. How long had you smoked before quitting? \_\_\_\_\_
9. She had lived in St. Louis before moving to St. Paul. \_\_\_\_\_
10. We had dated (*salir*) for three years before getting married. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. The soldiers had suffered a lot before the end of the war. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Before the party I had cleaned the house from top to bottom (*de cabo a rabo*). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. He hadn't washed his hair in three weeks. \_\_\_\_\_
14. I had never enjoyed (*disfrutar*) the theater as much as he. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Before going to bed, had you (*pl. fam.*) turned off (*apagar*) the lights? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Irregular Past Participles**

Whether the participle is regular or irregular, using the past perfect tense requires first conjugating *haber* in the imperfect (*había; habías; había; habíamos; habíais; habían*).

Past participles never change. Thus, those past participles that were irregular in the present perfect will be irregular in the past perfect (and in *all* compound tenses).

Irregularly formed past participles can be found in the previous unit on the present perfect.

*examples:*

**Yo había visto** la película.  
*I had seen* the movie.

**Habías vuelto** del mercado.  
*You had returned* from the market.

La comida **se había podrido**.  
 The food *had rotted*.

**Habíamos abierto** todas las ventanas.  
*We had opened* all the windows.

**Habíais envuelto** los regalos.  
*You had wrapped* the gifts.

Los científicos **habían descubierto** otro elemento.  
 The scientists *had discovered* another element.

**¿Cuál es verdadero o falso para ti?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Antes de leer *Huck Finn*, yo había leído *Tom Sawyer*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Yo había visto "Batman" antes de ver "Jurassic Park".
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Antes del año 1900, George Washington había muerto.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Agatha Christie había escrito muchas novelas de misterio antes de morir.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Pinocho había dicho muchas mentiras y por eso su nariz era muy larga.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Durante su vida, Martin Luther King, hijo, había hecho muchas cosas buenas para la gente.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Alguien había descubierto las Américas antes que Cristóbal Colón.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Para el año 1960, Sears había abierto muchas tiendas en los Estados Unidos.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Durante su vida, Gandhi había descrito su visión de la paz.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Al principio, Caperucita Roja había creído que el lobo era su abuela.

ejercicio	II-6-2
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- 1. I hadn't opened the windows until May of that year. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. They hadn't done anything. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. She hadn't seen the movie before Saturday. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. All the trees had died. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. We hadn't solved the problems before the meeting. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. The thieves had broken the chairs and the windows. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Had you (*pl. form.*) covered the tables before the storm (*la tormenta*)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Where had you put the money? \_\_\_\_\_
9. I had written fifty letters before receiving an answer. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Had they provided you with enough information? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. The food had rotted in the refrigerator. \_\_\_\_\_
12. We had fried enough potatoes for an army. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What had you done in order to help them? \_\_\_\_\_
14. The dog hadn't discovered the bones (*los huesos*) under the bed. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. The books had fallen from the shelf (*el estante*). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**¡Te toca a ti!**

¿Qué habías hecho hoy antes de abrir este libro? Responde con frases completas.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

traducción	11-6-3
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We had never been to (*in*) Europe before. We'd traveled a lot in South America and, of course, the United States, but never anywhere in Europe. My husband had won the trip on a game show (he'd always liked "Your Place or Mine," but had never dreamed of being a contestant on it). Anyway, before winning two million dollars (he has won more money on TV than anyone else in the world), Fenton already had decided on Europe—all of it. Before leaving, we had bought

