# 16 Past tenses overview

#### 16.1 PAST TENSES

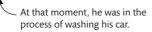
The past simple refers to a single, completed action in the past.

#### Phil washed his car on Tuesday.

— This is a completed action in the past that is now over.

The past continuous refers to a continuing action in the past.

## The last time I saw Phil, he was washing his car.



The present perfect simple refers to an unfinished action or series of actions that started in the past, or past actions that still have a consequence in the present moment.

#### Eve has arrived in London.

 Eve is still in London, so it is still relevant to the present moment.

The present perfect continuous refers to a continuing activity in the past that still has a consequence in the present moment.

### I have been painting the house all day. I'm exhausted!

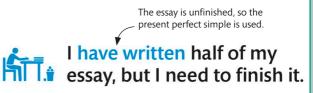
This is a consequence in the present moment.

#### 16.2 PAST SIMPLE AND PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE

The past simple is used to refer to single, completed actions or events in the past. These no longer have a consequence in the present moment.



The present perfect simple is used to refer to actions or events in the past that are unfinished, or still have consequences in the present moment.



The keys are still lost in the present moment, \_ so the present perfect simple is used.

I have lost my keys. I can't find them anywhere!

There are eight different ways to talk about the past in English. The differences between the past simple and the present perfect simple are particularly important.

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The past perfect simple refers to an action or event that took place before another action or event in the past.

### The game had started when I arrived at the stadium.

The past perfect continuous refers to a continuing action or event that was taking place before another action or event that happened in the past.

### I had been feeling unwell for days, so I went to the doctor.

"Used to" and "Would" are used to talk about repeated actions in the past that no longer happen.



"**Used to**" can also be used to refer to a fixed state at some indefinite time in the past that is no longer true.

### I used to live in London.

"Live" is a state, so — "would" can't be used.

#### 16.3 KEY LANGUAGE NARRATIVE TENSES

Narrative tenses are types of past tense that are used when telling a story. The past continuous is used to set the scene. The past simple describes actions in the story. The past perfect is used to talk about things that happened before the beginning of the story.

A crowd of people were celebrating the New Year when one of the young men kneeled down in front of his girlfriend and asked her to marry him. He had planned everything beforehand.

