

## Pluperfect or also known as Past Perfect

The past perfect is formed by combining the auxiliary verb "had" with the past participle.

*I had studied.*

*He had written a letter to María.*

*We had been stranded for six days.*

Because the past perfect is a compound tense, two verbs are required: the *main* verb and the *auxiliary* verb.

***I had studied.***

*(main verb: studied ; auxiliary verb: had)*

***He had written a letter to María.***

*(main verb: written ; auxiliary verb: had)*

***We had been stranded for six days.***

*(main verb: been ; auxiliary verb: had)*

In Spanish, the past perfect tense is formed by using the imperfect tense of the auxiliary verb "haber" with the past participle. Haber is conjugated as follows:

***había***

***habías***

***había***

***habíamos***

***habíais***

***habían***

You have already learned in a previous lesson that the past participle is formed by dropping the infinitive ending and adding either -ado or -ido. Remember, some past participles are irregular. The following examples all use the past participle for the verb "vivir."

*(yo) **Había vivido.***

*I had lived.*

*(tú) **Habías vivido.***

*You had lived.*

*(él) **Había vivido.***

*He had lived.*

(nosotros) **Habíamos vivido.**

We had lived.

(vosotros) **Habíais vivido.**

You-all had lived.

(ellos) **Habían vivido.**

They had lived.

**For a review of the formation of the past participle [\[click here\]](#).**

When you studied the past participle, you practiced using it as an adjective. When used as an adjective, the past participle changes to agree with the noun it modifies. However, when used in the perfect tenses, the past participle never changes.

**Past participle used as an adjective:**

La puerta está cerrada.

The door is closed.

**Past participle used in the past perfect tense:**

Yo había cerrado la puerta.

I had closed the door.

Here are a couple of more examples:

**Past participle used as an adjective:**

Las puertas están abiertas.

The doors are open.

**Past participle used in the past perfect tense:**

Juan había abierto las puertas.

Juan had opened the doors.

Note that when used to form the perfect tenses, only the base form (abierto) is used.

Let's look more carefully at the last example:

Juan había abierto las puertas.

Juan had opened the doors.

Notice that we use "había" to agree with "Juan". We do NOT use "habían" to agree with "puertas." The auxiliary verb is conjugated for the subject of the sentence, not the object. Compare these two examples:

Juan había abierto las puertas.

Juan had opened the doors.

**Juan y María habían puesto mucho dinero en el banco.**

*Juan and María had put a lot of money in the bank.*

In the first example, we use "había" because the subject of the sentence is "Juan." In the second example, we use "habían" because the subject of the sentence is "Juan y María."

The past perfect tense is used when a past action was completed prior to another past action. Expressions such as "ya", "antes", "nunca", "todavía" and "después" will often appear in sentences where one action was completed before another.

**Cuando llegaron los padres, los niños ya habían comido.**

*When the parents arrived, the children had already eaten.*

**Yo había comido antes de llamarles.**

*I had eaten prior to calling them.*

This idea of a past action being completed before another past action need not always be stated; it can be implied.

**Juan había cerrado la ventana antes de salir. (stated)**

*Juan had closed the window before leaving.*

**Juan había cerrado la ventana. (implied)**

*Juan had closed the window.*

The auxiliary verb and the past participle are never separated. To make the sentence negative, add the word "no" *before* the conjugated form of haber.

(yo) **No había vivido.**

*I had not lived.*

(tú) **No habías vivido.**

*You had not lived.*

(él) **No había vivido.**

*He had not lived.*

(nosotros) **No habíamos vivido.**

*We had not lived.*

(vosotros) **No habíais vivido.**

*You-all had not lived.*

(ellos) **No habían vivido.**

*They had not lived.*

Again, the auxiliary verb and the past participle are never separated. Object pronouns are placed immediately before the auxiliary verb.

**Pablo le había dado mucho dinero a su hermana.**

*Pablo had given a lot of money to his sister.*

*To make this sentence negative, the word "no" is placed before the indirect object pronoun (le).*

**Pablo no le había dado mucho dinero a su hermana.**

*Pablo had not given a lot of money to his sister.*

With reflexive verbs, the reflexive pronoun is placed immediately before the auxiliary verb. Compare how the present perfect differs from the simple present, when a reflexive verb is used.

**Me lavo las manos.** (present)

*I wash my hands.*

**Me había lavado las manos.** (past perfect)

*I had washed my hands.*

*To make this sentence negative, the word "no" is placed before the reflexive pronoun (me).*

**No me había lavado las manos.**

*I had not washed my hands.*

**For a review of reflexive verbs click [\[here\]](#) and [\[here\]](#).**

Questions are formed as follows. Note how the word order is different than the English equivalent.

**¿Habían llegado ya las chicas?**

*Had the girls arrived yet?*

**¿Habías probado ya el postre?**

*Had you tried the dessert yet?*

Here are the same questions in negative form. Notice how the auxiliary verb and the past participle are not separated.

**¿No habían llegado ya las chicas?**

*Hadn't the girls arrived yet?*

**¿No habías probado ya el postre?**

*Hadn't you tried the dessert yet?*