



Advanced Past Tenses — B2 exercises

Printable worksheet · 23 questions · answer key with explanations on the last page
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Name _____ Date _____ Score _____ / 23

A. Multiple choice

10 questions

Circle the letter of the correct answer.

- By the time the inspectors reached the warehouse, the manager ____ every relevant file.
A) shredded B) was shredding C) had shredded D) has shredded
- His eyes were bloodshot — he ____ at a screen for nine hours without a break.
A) had been staring B) stared C) was staring D) has been staring
- We ____ by the coast, and every evening we ____ along the shore before supper.
A) would live / would walk B) used to live / would walk
C) would live / used to walk D) were living / walked
- I ____ to call you last night, but I heard you were away at the conference.
A) was going B) was about C) would go D) had gone
- She ____ to leave when the call from Geneva came through.
A) was going B) used C) was about D) would
- Which sentence correctly places two past events in sequence?
A) When I arrived, the meeting already started.
B) When I arrived, the meeting had already started.
C) When I had arrived, the meeting already started.
D) When I was arriving, the meeting had been starting.
- The orchestra ____ the second movement when the power failed across the entire building.
A) played B) had played C) was playing D) would play
- Which sentence is INCORRECT?
A) He used to smoke heavily. B) He would smoke on the balcony after dinner.
C) He used to own a small vineyard. D) He would own a small vineyard.
- Nobody realised how ill he ____ until the obituary appeared in the paper.
A) had been B) was being C) used to be D) would be
- She ____ for the same firm for eleven years before the takeover was announced.
A) worked B) had been working C) was working D) has been working

B. Fill in the blank

8 questions

Write the missing word or words in the gap.

- By the time we reached the platform, the last service _____ already left.

2. She _____ to work in television before she retrained as an architect.
3. Every Sunday my grandfather _____ take us to the harbour to watch the boats come in.
4. The kitchen was full of smoke because something _____ been burning for some time.
5. I _____ about to sign the contract when my solicitor rang with a warning.
6. They _____ going to expand into Poland, but the currency collapsed first.
7. While the delegates _____ debating the amendment, reporters filed their copy from the corridor.
8. He denied that he _____ ever met the claimant, which the photographs disproved.

C. Sentence building

5 questions

Put the words in the correct order and write the sentence on the line.

1. the / time / By / the / dispersed. / arrived, / the / had / police / crowd

Put two past events in order using the past perfect.

2. years / been / the / there / before / for / working / She / had / merger.

Measure how long something went on before a later past event.

3. used / August / We / every / island. / spend / the / to / on / same

Describe a finished holiday habit.

4. us / would / read / before / My / to / bed. / father

Use the alternative to used to that only works for actions.

5. I / apply, / going / passed. / deadline / the / but / was / to

Report a plan you never carried out.

Answer key

Every answer carries the reason behind it. Read the reason for the questions you got right as well — that is where you find out whether you were right for the right reason.

A. Multiple choice

1. **C) had shredded** — The past perfect marks an action completed before the later past event in the same sentence.
2. **A) had been staring** — Past evidence of an activity that ran up to that past moment takes the past perfect continuous.
3. **B) used to live / would walk** — Used to covers past states; would covers only repeated actions, so live cannot take would.
4. **A) was going** — Was going to reports an intention that was formed in advance and then abandoned.
5. **C) was about** — Was about to describes being on the very point of acting when something interrupts.
6. **B) When I arrived, the meeting had already started.** — The earlier of two past events takes the past perfect; the later one stays in the past simple.
7. **C) was playing** — The past continuous supplies the background action that a sudden past simple event interrupts.
8. **D) He would own a small vineyard.** — Would cannot express a past state; ownership is a state, so only used to works there.
9. **A) had been** — The illness preceded the realisation, so the earlier state takes the past perfect.
10. **B) had been working** — Duration running up to a stated past point takes the past perfect continuous.

B. Fill in the blank

1. **had** — The past perfect is had plus the past participle and marks the earlier of two past events.
2. **used** — Used to introduces a finished past occupation, which is a state rather than an action.
3. **would** — Would expresses a repeated past action, which is exactly what a weekly outing is.
4. **had** — The perfect continuous in the past uses had plus been plus the -ing form.
5. **was** — Was about to describes an action interrupted at the very last moment.
6. **were** — A plural subject takes were with going to for an intention that was dropped.
7. **were** — The past continuous supplies the longer background activity that a past simple event happens inside.
8. **had** — Reporting a denial about an earlier past shifts the verb into the past perfect.

C. Sentence building

1. **By the time the police arrived, the crowd had dispersed.**
2. **She had been working there for years before the merger.**
3. **We used to spend every August on the same island.**
4. **My father would read to us before bed.**
5. **I was going to apply, but the deadline passed.**