

Past Perfect

We always have many options when it comes to describing events / sequences / the relationship between case notes.

Here is a typical example of a presentation / treatment. What would you do?

John Smith

Admission date: 19th June 2024

- road traffic accident - ? suspected skull fracture – CT confirm (minor)
- monitoring – 48 hours
- severe fracture – radius – open reduction internal fixation ORIF

You have a few choices about how to tell this story:

- Go chronological: list all of the events in the order in which they happened
- Use linkers: due to / for which / resulting in / which confirmed
- Play with the order of time: use past perfect

What is the past perfect?

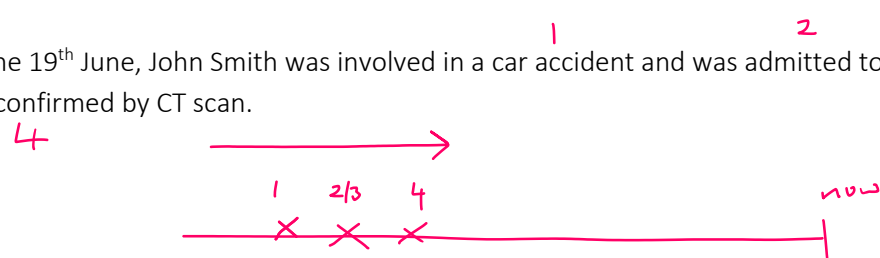
We use the past perfect when we want to discuss events / states **before** an established time in the past.

Past tenses are narrative tenses – they tell stories. Stories are in the past.

Let's just look at the tenses that sometimes get mixed up with past perfect:

Past Simple: Tells us about events / states at finished times in the past.

On the 19th June, John Smith was involved in a car accident and was admitted to the hospital. He had a suspected skull fracture, which was confirmed by CT scan.



The past simple follows the order of time. **It is chronological.**

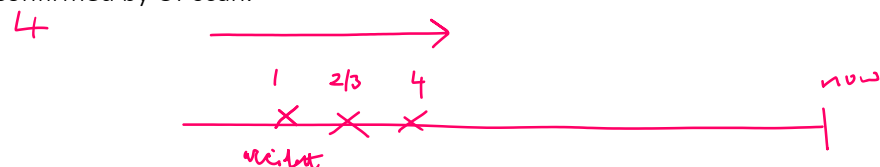
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- **Present Perfect** tell us about events that happened in the past in a time period which is still open or about events in the past which affect the present directly.
 - **has + past participle**

It's important to know that 'perfect' means 'before':

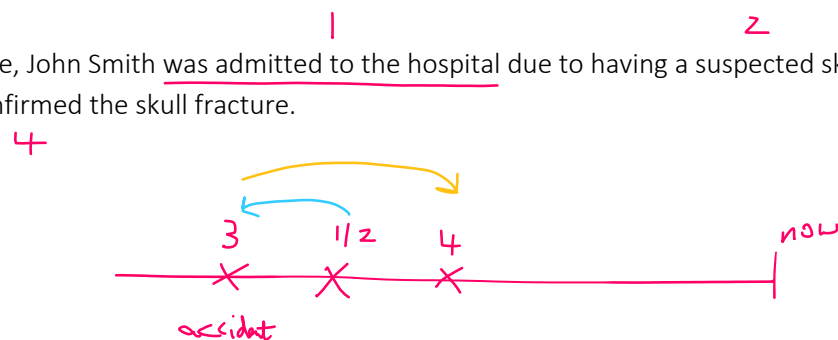
- **Future perfect:** They are building a school opposite my house. It will have been built by next summer. (before the future)
- **Present perfect:** I have lost my keys. (before now)
- **Past perfect:** Paul took paracetamol. He had hurt his head. (before the past)

Let's compare past simple & past perfect:

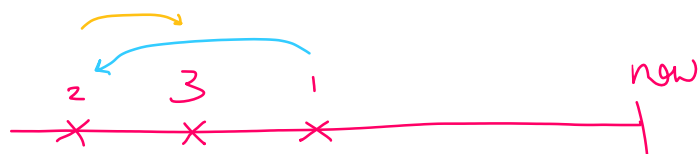
A) On the 19th June, John Smith was involved in a car accident and was admitted to the hospital. He had a suspected skull fracture, which was confirmed by CT scan.



B) On 19th June, John Smith was admitted to the hospital due to having a suspected skull fracture. He had been involved in a car accident. A CT scan confirmed the skull fracture.



Mr Smith was admitted on the 19th June 2024. He had been involved in a car accident and then had a heart attack.



WHENEVER WE MOVE CHRONOLOGICALLY, WE USE PAST SIMPLE

Past perfect:

had + past participle

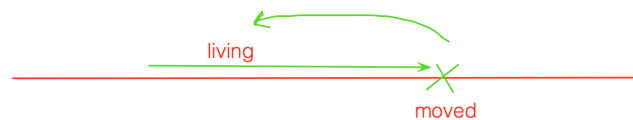
Mr Smith was admitted on the 19th June. He had been involved in a car accident.



Past perfect continuous:


had + been + verb + ing

Mr Johnson moved to a nursing home on the 15th June 2019. He had been living on his own before then.



When will we use it in OET Writing?	
Timeline	We often have multiple dates but the case notes in the earlier dates aren't significant. We can summarise them. Sometimes we want to start our story at a later date in the timeline and refer briefly to something before it.

Tricky Parts / Common errors	
last / past / previous / before / ago	<p>Time phrases can be confused & mixed up</p> <p>ago – past simple</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He had a heart attack three months ago. (Three months before now) <p>the last / past – present perfect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He has had two heart attacks in the last / past six months (In the six month period up to now) <p>previous / prior - past perfect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Smith had a heart attack in June. He had had two heart attacks in the previous six months. (In the six months leading up to June) <p>before - use with multiple tense</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul went to Spain in 1990. He met a friend online before he went.

<p>next / the next</p>	<p>Next week – the week after now</p> <p>Next week, I am going to visit my grandparents.</p> <p>The next week – the week after a time in the past</p> <p>On 14th July 2024 Mr Smith presented with a rash on his shoulders. The next week, the rash was on his chest.</p> 
<p>Common mistakes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use present perfect instead of past perfect & vice versa • Use past simple instead of past perfect & vice versa • Confusion about 'be' - continuous tenses - passive - adjectives <p>See how the word 'be' can be confused in different ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I picked my son up from school early. He had been crying. - I picked up my son from school early because he had been hit by a football in the face. - I picked up my son from school early. He had been upset about losing his favourite car. - She had been experienced two heart attacks.


Exercise

Are these sentences ok? If not, why not?

- 1) Mr Comstock has been diagnosed with depression in 2014.
- 2) Mr Smith presents on the 4th March 2023 with symptoms suggestive of a chest infection.
- 3) Mrs Farnham had open heart surgery on the 8th April. She had experienced two heart attacks in March.
- 4) Sarah Kennedy requires your urgent assistance because she has experienced two serious asthma attacks in the last two days.
- 5) Mr Greene had been moved from intensive care to a general ward yesterday.
- 6) Ms Baez experienced numbness in her left hand and lower arm since last Thursday.
- 7) You couldn't eat this afternoon before your procedure.
- 8) When Mr Smith presented in January I couldn't recognize him. He had undergone facial surgery two months previously.

Exercise

Tell the story starting from different dates:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 13th June: Found a lesion on back of hand 2. 14th June: GP visit – referred dermatologist 3. 28th June: Dermatologist – biopsy 4. 30th June: Biopsy – confirm basal cell carcinoma 5. 5th July: Dermatologist – remove carcinoma 	

Answers

Exercise

Are these sentences ok? If not, why not?

- 1) Mr Comstock was diagnosed with depression in 2014. – Correct!
- 2) Mr Smith *presented* on the 4th March with symptoms suggestive of a chest infection.
- 3) Mrs Farnham had open heart surgery on the 8th April. She *had experienced* two heart attacks in March.
- 4) Sarah Kennedy requires your urgent assistance because she *has experienced* two serious asthma attacks in the last two days.
- 5) Mr Greene *was* moved from intensive care to a general ward yesterday.
- 6) Ms Baez has been experiencing numbness in her left hand and lower arm since last Thursday. – Correct!
- 7) You *can't* eat this afternoon before your procedure.
- 8) When Mr Smith presented in January I recognized him. He had undergone throat surgery two months previously. - Correct