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English In A Minute

The past perfect tense



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Hi, everyone! I'm James and today we're going to talk about the **past perfect tense** – how we form it and why we use it.

By the time I arrived at the airport, the plane had already left. In this example, **had left** is the past perfect tense.

The structure for the past perfect tense is **had + a past participle**.

There are two past actions: arriving at the airport and the plane leaving. But which of these happened first?

The clue is the **past perfect** tense. The action in the **past perfect** is the action that always happens first. Because the verb 'leave' is in the **past perfect** – had left – we know that this action happened first. The action that happened second is often in the past simple tense – in this example: 'I arrived'.

When you want to talk about two past actions, one which happened before the other, remember to use the **past perfect** for the first action and the past simple for the second.

Thanks for joining us for this English In A Minute.