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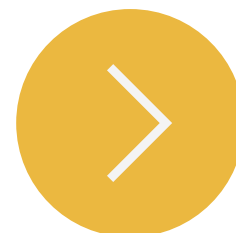
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TENSES L8 – THE PAST PERFECT (PLUSQUAMPERFEKT)

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BASIC INFO

In German, we call the past perfect "Plusquamperfekt" or "Vorvergangenheit".

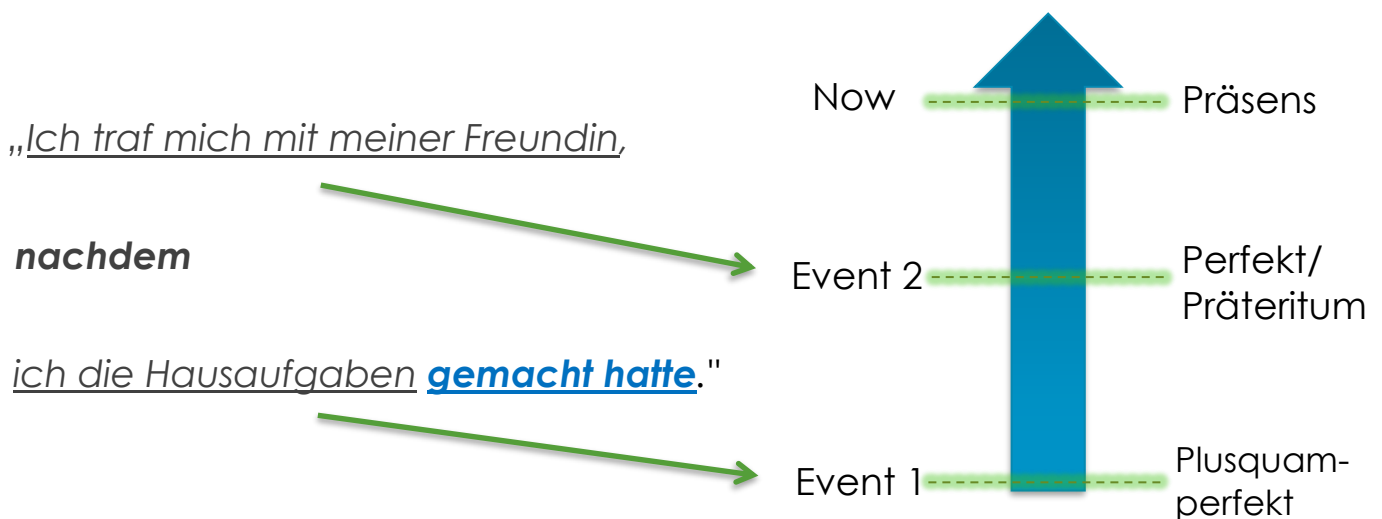
We express that an action occurred before a specific point in time in the past.

We use the Plusquamperfekt in a narrative about the past whenever we look back on something that happened before the event we are talking about, just like in English.

EXAMPLES

- „Beim Fußballturnier schoß Jan drei Tore." (simple past)
„Er **hatte** vorher viel **trainiert**." (past perfect)
- „Als er zu Hause ankam, (simple past) **hatte** sie schon **gegessen**." (past perfect)

OVERVIEW



CONSTRUCTION

Simple past (Präteritum) of "sein" or "haben" + past participle (Partizip 2):

Person	Auxiliary Verb	Partizip 2	Auxiliary Verb	Partizip 2
ich	war	gelaufen.	hatte	gekocht.
du	warst		hattest	
er/sie/es	war		hatte	
wir	waren		hatten	
ihr	wart		hattet	

sie/Sie

waren

hatten

Use either "sein" and "haben" the same way you would use it for the perfect tense: movements from A to B, changes of status, and the verbs "sein", "werden", "bleiben" use "sein".

All other verbs use "haben" as an auxiliary verb.

USE OF THE PAST PERFECT

It's used most often in novels and written language. In colloquial language, we usually use it only after some signal words.

Signal words that indicate the plus perfect tense:

nachdem: „**Nachdem** er die Prüfung **bestanden hatte**, hat er gefeiert.“

bevor: „**Bevor** ich das Auto gekauft habe, **hatte** ich lange **gespart**.“

als: „**Als** ich ankam, **waren** alle schon **gegangen**.“

Tip about Colloquial Language

In colloquial language, native speakers often (incorrectly) replace the Plusquamperfekt with the Perfekt (present perfect) or Präteritum (simple past).

Correct: „Er hat das Rennen gewonnen. Er **hatte** vorher viel **trainiert**.“

But often: „Er hat das Rennen gewonnen. Er hat vorher viel trainiert.“

SUMMARY

- The German past perfect (Plusquamperfekt) is very similar to the English past perfect.
- However, there are no continuous or progressive versions ("-ing" versions)!
- In colloquial language, it's often replaced by the perfect tense (even though this is grammatically incorrect). You have to use it after: "Nachdem", "bevor" and "als" if the first action is already in the past!

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