

DESCRIBE WHERE THEY WERE IN THE PAST

PAST EVENTS AND SITUATIONS

We use the **past simple** to talk about:

- something that happened **once in the past**:
 - *The film **started** at seven thirty.*
 - *We **arrived** home before dark.*
- something that **was true for some time in the past**:
 - *Everybody **worked** hard through the winter.*
 - *We **stayed** with our friends in London.*

When we talk about something that happened **several times in the past**, we use the **past simple**:

- *Most evenings, we **stayed** at home and watched DVDs.*
- *Sometimes they **went** out for a meal.*

Or **used to**:

- *Most evenings, we **used to stay** at home and watch DVDs.*
- *We **used to go** for a swim every morning.*

Or **would**:

- *Most evenings, he **would take** the dog for a walk.*
- *They **would** often **visit** friends in Europe.*

We do not normally use *would* with **stative verbs**. We use the **past simple** or **used to** instead:

- *He **would looked** much older than he does now. (NOT would look).*
- *We **would used to feel** very cold in winter. (NOT would feel)*

We use the past continuous:

- for something that **happened before and after a specific time in the past:**
 - *It was just after ten. I **was watching** the news on TV.*
 - *At half-time we **were losing** 1-0.*
- for something that **happened before and after another action in the past:**
 - *He broke his leg when he **was playing** rugby.*
 - *She saw Jim as he **was driving** away.*

THE PAST IN THE PAST

We use the **past perfect** when we are **looking back** from a point in the past to something earlier in the past:

- *Helen suddenly remembered she **had left** her keys in the car.*
- *When we **had done** all our shopping, we caught the bus home.*
- *They wanted to buy a new computer, but they **hadn't saved** enough money.*
- *They would have bought a new computer if they **had saved** enough money.*

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

We use the **present perfect:**

- for something that **started in the past and continues in the present:**
 - *We **have lived** here since 2017. [and we still live here]*
 - *I **have been working** at the university for over ten years.*
- for something that **happened in the past but is important in the present:**
 - *I can't open the door. I've **left** my keys in the car.*
 - *Jenny **has found** a new job. She works in a supermarket now.*

⚠ Be careful!

We do not use the present perfect with adverbials which refer to a finished past time:

yesterday	last week/month/year	in 2010	when I was younger, etc.
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- I **have seen** that film **yesterday**.
- We **have just bought** a new car **last week**.
- ~~When we were children~~ we **have been** to California.

But we can use the present perfect with adverbials which refer to a time which is not yet finished:

today	this morning/week/year	now that I am eighteen, etc.
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- Have you seen Helen **today**?
- We have bought a new car **this week**.

THE FUTURE IN THE PAST

When we talk about the **future from a time in the past** we use:

- **would** as the past tense of *will*.
 - *He thought he **would buy** one the next day.*
 - *Everyone was excited. The party **would be** fun.*
- **was/were going to**.
 - *John **was going to drive**, and Mary **was going to follow** on her bicycle.*
 - *It was Friday. We **were going to set off** the next day.*
- the **past continuous**:
 - *It was September. Mary **was starting** school the next week.*
 - *We were very busy. Our guests **were arriving** soon, and we had to get their room ready.*

THE PAST WITH MODAL VERBS

could is the past tense of *can*:

- You **could get** a good meal for a pound when I was a boy.

would is the past tense of *will*.

- *He said he **would come** but he forgot.*

We use **may have**, **might have** and **could have** to show that something has possibly happened in the past:

- *I'll telephone him. He **might have got home** early.*
- *She's very late. She **could have missed** her train.*

We use **should have** as the past form of *should*.

- *I didn't know he was ill. He **should have told** me.*
- *You **shouldn't have spent** so much money.*

We use **would have** and **could have** to talk about something that was possible in the past but did **not** happen:

- *I **could have gone** to Mexico for my holiday, but it was too expensive.*
- *I **would have called** you, but I had forgotten my phone.*
- *They **would have gone** out if the weather had been better.*

Referencia:

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