

### 3 Past reasons

We often use the past perfect to describe the reason for a past action or situation:

*David didn't join the agency as he'd **signed up** with a rival firm.*

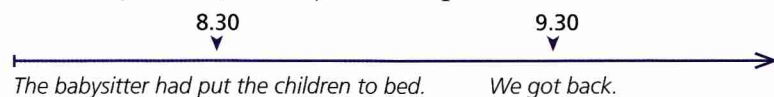
*The survivors looked painfully thin. They **had been living** on emergency rations since the accident.*

### 4 Sequence of past actions

We can use the past perfect with the past simple to make a sequence of events clear.

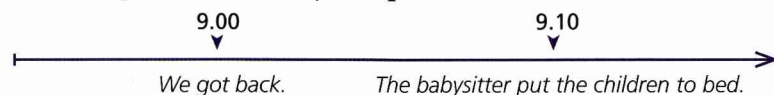
We use the past perfect for the earlier action and the past simple for the later one:

*When we **got back**, the babysitter **had put** the children to bed.*



Notice the difference if both verbs are in the past simple:

*When we **got back**, the babysitter **put** the children to bed.*



We can use *just* with the past perfect to show that the earlier action was very recent:

*We wanted to talk to the manager in charge but she'd **just left**.*

Or we can use *already* to show that the action happened sooner than we expected:

*When we got back, we were shocked to find that the babysitter **had already gone** home.*



We don't usually use the past perfect if the sequence is obvious and the first action makes the second happen:

[*I had opened the door and let him in.*]

✓ *I opened the door and let him in.* (He was able to come in because I opened the door.)

We can use either the past perfect or the past simple with time conjunctions,

e.g. *after, before, as soon as, when*:

*She ushered me out of the room as soon as I **paid/had paid** my subscription.*

With *before* + past perfect the action in the past simple happens first:

*I left university **before I'd finished** the course I was taking.*

We can use this pattern for a past action which prevented a later action from happening:

*She sacked him **before he'd had** a chance to explain his behaviour.*

### 5 Other uses

We can use the past perfect with superlatives, ordinals (*the first, second, last, etc.*), *the only*, etc. + *ever*:

*I remember seeing 'Nightmare on Elm Street' when I was only eighteen. It was the most frightening film I'd ever **seen**.*

*They wanted us to go on the higher slopes but it was only the second time we'd ever **done** any skiing.*

We use the past perfect with verbs such as *hope, expect, want, plan, think about, wish* to describe past intentions which were unfulfilled:

*They **had hoped** to get to the summit, but Travers fell ill at base camp.*

*We'd **been planning** the merger for weeks when we received the news that it was all off.*

Remember that we don't usually use the continuous form with state verbs:

*Suzie **had wanted** to leave her job and start her own business, but then she was offered a fantastic promotion and decided to stay.*

State verbs ► Unit 25.1