ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Mixed Tenses Multiple Choice Test 3

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Explanations

1. The nylon blouse _____ fire as soon as the spark _____ it.
✔ **D) caught / touched**
Both actions are finished events in the past, one right after the other, so both verbs use the past simple: **caught** and **touched**. **As soon as** links two quick past events. Not **had catched**: the past of **catch** is irregular (**caught**), and **catched** does not exist.

2. She _____ for that sick animal for two months now. She _____ it very much.
✔ **B) has been caring / must love**
For two months now shows an action that started in the past and is still going on, so we use the present perfect continuous: **has been caring**. The second gap is a logical guess about the present: **must love** means 'surely loves'. Not **had been caring**: **now** links the action to the present, not the past.

3. The sculpture _____ by my friend Kate _____ worthy of exhibition in the museum.
✔ **D) made / was considered**
Made by my friend Kate is a shortened passive clause (= **which was made by**), so we need the past participle **made**. The sculpture did not consider anything; other people considered it, so the main verb is passive: **was considered**. Not **was considering**, because that is active.

4. The ruler of the land _____ the people to carry any type of arms.
✔ **A) forbids**
The sentence needs a main verb in the present simple for a general fact. The subject **the ruler** is singular, so we use **forbids** (**forbid someone to do something**). **Forbidden**, **forbidding** and **to forbid** cannot be the main verb alone.

5. I _____ any publicity. The press today _____ always _____ to make a mountain out of a molehill.
✔ **C) don't want / is / trying**
The present simple **don't want** expresses a present wish with the subject **I**. **Is always trying** uses the present continuous with **always** to complain about an annoying habit. **The press** is treated as singular here, so we use **is**. **To make a mountain out of a molehill** means to treat a small problem as a big one.

6. Although the sign _____ "private" _____ on it, no one _____ any attention to it.
✔ **D) had / written / paid**
The pattern **have something done/written on it** uses **had** + object + past participle: **the sign had "private" written on it**. The main clause is a finished past event, so we use the past simple **paid** (**pay attention to**). Not **wrote**: after **had** + object we need the participle **written**.

7. The ornaments in the window _____ very original. They _____ at the local department store.
✔ **E) weren't / must have been bought**
The ornaments did not buy anything; someone bought them, so we need a passive form. **Must have been bought** is a past passive deduction (= surely somebody bought them there). The first gap is past simple **weren't** to describe what we saw. Not **had bought**: that is active and would mean the ornaments did the buying.

8. The children _____ the man when they _____ his prized rose bush with their ball.
✔ **B) angered / broke**
Both actions are finished events in the past that happened at the same time, so both verbs use the past simple: **angered** and **broke**. Not **had broke**: the past participle of **break** is **broken**, and the past perfect is not needed here.

9. I _____ to lie down and relax for an hour before the concert, but Kevin and Karen _____ by for a visit.
✔ **D) was going / dropped**
Was going to expresses a past plan that did not happen. The plan was interrupted by a finished past action, so the second verb uses the past simple: **dropped by** (= visited). Not **am going**, because the story is in the past.

10. The workers in the office _____ to work overtime on weekends because they _____ already _____ plans.
✔ **E) were refusing / had / made**
The past continuous **were refusing** describes the workers' situation in the past. Their plans were made earlier than that, so we use the past perfect: **had already made**. Not **do / made**: **do** cannot be followed by **made**.

11. I _____ permission to reorganise the filing system in the office, but I _____ the time to do it.
✔ **A) had received / couldn't find**
The permission came first, so we use the past perfect **had received**. The past simple **couldn't find** describes the later problem. **But** shows the contrast between having permission and not having time. Not **have received / finding**: **finding** cannot follow **I** without a helping verb.

12. We _____ through the entire house but _____ to find the hidden treasures supposedly there.
✔ **E) had searched / weren't able**
The search happened before the result, so the past perfect **had searched** fits. The past simple **weren't able to find** gives the result. Not **have been searched**: it is passive, but **we** did the searching.

13. My superiors _____ my performance at work and _____ me to assist in training new employees.
✓ B) praised / asked
The two actions are finished past events joined by **and**, so both verbs use the active past simple: **praised** and **asked**. The superiors did the actions, so the passive (**were asked**, **was praised**) is wrong.

14. I _____ the phone at the moment, so you _____ your friend.
✓ D) am not using / can call
At the moment calls for the present continuous. **So** shows a result: the phone is free, so you are allowed to use it. That means **am not using / can call**. Not **am using / can call**, because if I am using the phone, you can't call.

15. The students _____ to pass this class without going to summer school.
✓ C) are determined
Be determined to do something means to have firmly decided to do it: **The students are determined to pass.** Here **determined** works as an adjective after **are**. Not **are determining**, because **determine** means 'decide' or 'find out', not 'want strongly'.

16. The awkward situation I _____ myself in _____ something I _____ to forget.
✓ A) found / is / would like
Found myself in (past simple) describes a past event. The subject **the awkward situation** is singular, so the verb is **is**. **Would like to** expresses a polite present wish. Not **are**, because **situation** is singular.

17. The amusing stories _____ to us by Michael _____ much too short.
✓ D) told / were
Told to us by Michael is a shortened passive clause (= **which were told**), so we need the past participle **told**. The subject **stories** is plural, so the past simple verb is **were**. Not **were being**: the continuous form is not used for a simple description like this.

18. I _____ the flowers in the vase when the answer to the difficult problem _____ to my mind.
✓ A) was arranging / came
The past continuous **was arranging** shows a longer action in progress. A short action interrupted it, so the second verb is past simple: **came** (**come to mind** = suddenly think of). Not **had been arranging / had been coming**: a sudden idea is not a long action.

19. He _____ strangely but the nurses _____ him carefully.
✓ E) was behaving / were watching
Both actions were in progress at the same time in the past, so both use the past continuous: **was behaving** and **were watching**. **Nurses** is plural, so we need **were**. Not **acted / was watching**: **was** does not agree with **nurses**.

20. They _____ new barricades at the boundary to prevent unwanted groups from getting in.
✓ B) have constructed
The present perfect **have constructed** shows a recent action with a result now (the barricades are there). **They** is plural and active, so we use **have constructed**. Not **had been constructed**: it is passive, but **they** did the building.

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