ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Mixed Tenses MCQ Test With Answers + PDF Exercise 1

English Grammar Tests · 20 questions · Online test and questions PDF: https://englishtestsonline.com/mixed-tenses-test-1/

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Explanations

1. Ann _____ that she _____ the visitor before.
✓ **D) thought / had seen**
The main verb is in the past (**thought**). Seeing the visitor happened earlier, before that past moment, so we use the past perfect: **had seen**. Not **has seen**, because the present perfect does not fit after a past verb like **thought**.

2. As it _____ dark we _____ to go home.
✓ **D) was getting / decided**
Was getting (past continuous) describes a situation in progress in the past: it was slowly becoming dark. Because of this, we **decided** (past simple) to go home, a single completed action.

3. He _____ looking at her, wondering where he _____ her.
✓ **B) kept / had seen**
The story is in the past, so we use **kept** (past simple of **keep**). He had seen her at some earlier time, before he looked at her, so we use the past perfect **had seen**.

4. They _____ to get married last month although they _____ each other for only six weeks.
✓ **C) decided / had known**
Last month needs the past simple: **decided**. **For only six weeks** shows a period that lasted up to that past moment, so we use the past perfect **had known**. Not **knew**, because we need to show the time before the decision.

5. _____ the weather good when you _____ tennis?
✓ **B) was / were playing**
The question is about a past situation, so we use **was** for the weather. **Were playing** (past continuous) shows the game was in progress at that time. Not **is / played**, because the weather and the game happened at the same past time.

6. When he _____ to the station, the train _____ already.
✓ **C) came / had left**
He **came** to the station (past simple). The train left before that moment, so we use the past perfect **had left**. The word **already** is a clue for the past perfect here.

7. Last Monday when I _____ the house it _____ heavily.
✓ **B) left / was raining**
Left (past simple) is a short action at a past time (**last Monday**). **Was raining** (past continuous) is the longer background action that was in progress at that moment. Not **was leaving / rained**, because the rain was the background, not the short action.

8. Yesterday when Tom _____, the lesson _____.
✓ **B) came / had already begun**
Tom **came** yesterday (past simple). The lesson started before he arrived, so we use the past perfect **had already begun**. Not **already began**, because in British English **already** with an earlier past action takes the past perfect.

9. I _____ the call because I _____ a shower.
✓ **A) didn’t answer / was taking**
Didn't answer (past simple) is the completed past action. **Was taking a shower** (past continuous) explains what was in progress at that moment.

10. After Mary _____ the room, she _____ the floor.
✓ **D) had tidied up / washed**
After shows the order of two past actions. The first one (tidying the room) uses the past perfect **had tidied up**, and the second one uses the past simple **washed**. Not **has tidied up**, because the present perfect does not mix with a past narrative.

11. Yesterday at this time when his hat _____ he _____ across the bridge.
✓ **D) blew off / was walking**
Yesterday at this time points to an action in progress in the past: **was walking** (past continuous). The hat **blew off** (past simple) is the short action that happened during the walk.

12. He wanted us to go to the skating rink together. As he _____ I _____ my skates, he _____ me his brother’s.
✓ **C) knew / had broken / offered**
The story is in the past: he **knew** and he **offered** (past simple). Breaking the skates happened earlier, before he knew about it, so we use the past perfect **had broken**. Not **has broken**, because the present perfect does not fit in a past story.

13. Tom looked at his hands. He _____ that those hands _____ young and strong before.
✓ **E) knew / had been**
Knew (past simple) matches the past story (**Tom looked**). His hands were young and strong at an earlier time, so we use the past perfect **had been**. The word **before** is the clue. Not **was**, because **hands** is plural.

14. He _____ us the firm _____ wool since 1935.
✓ **A) told / had been exporting**
In reported speech after **told**, the present perfect continuous moves back to the past perfect continuous: **had been exporting**. **Since 1935** shows an action continuing over a period up to that past moment. Not **was exporting**, because the past continuous is not used with **since**.

15. He didn’t _____ well though he _____ a hard day before.
✔ **D) sleep / had spent**
After **didn't** we use the base form: **sleep**. The hard day came before the night, so we use the past perfect **had spent**. Not **slept**, because **didn't** is never followed by the past form.

16. He _____ at the blackboard and _____ that the English teacher _____ the word “apple” there.
✔ **C) looked / saw / was writing**
The story is in the past: he **looked** and **saw** (past simple, one action after the other). The teacher **was writing** (past continuous) because the writing was in progress when he looked.

17. Mr Brown _____ to me 2 hours ago to return the book which he _____.
✔ **B) came / had borrowed**
2 hours ago needs the past simple: **came**. He borrowed the book before he came, so we use the past perfect **had borrowed**. Not **has borrowed**, because the present perfect does not fit with a past story.

18. No sooner _____ than he _____ ill.
✔ **B) had he arrived / fell**
When **No sooner** starts a sentence, we use inversion with the past perfect: **No sooner had he arrived**. The second action uses the past simple after **than**: **he fell ill**. Not **had he arrived / falls**, because the story is in the past, so we need **fell**.

19. I _____ my homework by 6 o’clock yesterday and when my mother came home I _____ supper.
✔ **C) had done / was having**
By 6 o'clock yesterday shows an action completed before a past time, so we use the past perfect **had done**. **Was having** (past continuous) shows supper was in progress when the mother came home.

20. He said that he _____ school and he _____ to enter the academy.
✔ **C) had finished / was going**
In reported speech after **said**, tenses usually move back. **I have finished** becomes **had finished**, and **I am going to** becomes **was going to**. Not **has finished / was going**, because it mixes a present tense with a past one; keep both verbs in the past.

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