ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Past Tenses Test B1 Grammar Exercises

A2 B1 Level Grammar Tests · 20 questions · Online test and questions PDF:
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Explanations

1. When Patricia _____ into her car, she remembered she _____ the water boiler on.
✔ **B) got / had left**
Use the **past simple** (**got**) for the main past action. Use the **past perfect** (**had left**) for the action that happened before it: she left the boiler on before she got into the car. Not **has left**, because the story is in the past.

2. We _____ our meal on the train as it _____ across the beautiful countryside.
✔ **D) were enjoying / was going**
Both actions were in progress at the same time in the past, so use the **past continuous** twice: **were enjoying** and **was going**. The word **as** means 'while' here.

3. They _____ for only a few minutes when they _____ a flat tyre.
✔ **A) had been travelling / had**
Use the **past perfect continuous** (**had been travelling**) for an action that lasted for a time (**for only a few minutes**) before another past event. The sudden event is in the **past simple** (**had a flat tyre**). Not **were travelling**, because **for + time** up to a past moment needs the past perfect continuous.

4. Grandpa _____ his last car for thirty years when he _____ it last year.
✔ **D) had had / sold**
Have (own) is not used in continuous forms. He owned the car for thirty years before he sold it, so use the **past perfect had had**, and the **past simple sold** with **last year**.

5. Although he _____ his early childhood in Germany, he doesn't remember anything from that time now.
✔ **C) spent**
His early childhood is a finished period in the past, so use the **past simple**: **spent**. Not **has spent**, because that time is over.

6. Vegetables and fruits don't taste as delicious as they _____ when I _____ a kid.
✔ **D) used to / was**
Used to describes a past situation that is no longer true: vegetables and fruits tasted more delicious in the past than they do now. **Used to** can stand alone here because **taste delicious** is already understood: they used to (taste delicious). The past simple **did** would also work in the first blank (as they did when I was a kid), but that option is wrong because of **have been**. **When I was a kid** refers to a finished period in the past, so the past simple **was** is needed. The present perfect (**have done**, **have been**) doesn't go with a finished past time, and **had been** is wrong because there is no earlier past event here. **Were doing** describes an action in progress, not a past situation that has changed.

7. What _____ the two _____ about when they started to quarrel?
✔ **B) were / talking**
The talking was in progress when the quarrel started, so use the **past continuous**: **What were the two talking about?**

8. Frank _____ to this city five years ago, but it seems he still _____ used to living with the heavy traffic here.
✔ **A) moved / isn't**
Five years ago needs the **past simple**: **moved**. **Be used to + -ing** means 'be familiar with'; it is true now, so use **isn't used to**. Not **doesn't** or **didn't**, because the expression uses **be**, not **do**.

9. I _____ my pen, and I don't remember where I last _____ it.
✔ **C) have lost / used**
The pen is still lost now, so use the **present perfect**: **have lost**. **Last used it** is a finished moment in the past, so use the **past simple**: **used**.

10. It was a real surprise because she _____ no idea that they _____ a birthday party for her.
✔ **D) had / had organized**
Have no idea is a state, so use the **past simple had**, not **was having**. They organized the party before she found out, so use the **past perfect**: **had organized**.

11. The baby _____ the living room floor with coloured pens while her mother _____ the kitchen.
✔ **B) was marking / was mopping**
Two actions were happening at the same time in the past, linked by **while**, so use the **past continuous** twice: **was marking** and **was mopping**.

12. There _____ some ketchup around his mouth because he _____ spaghetti.
✓ **A) was / had been eating**
The ketchup was there at a past moment, so use **was**. He had been eating spaghetti just before that, and the result was visible, so use the **past perfect continuous**: **had been eating**.

13. Because I _____ to eating with chopsticks, I _____ a hard time during the dinner.
✓ **C) wasn't used / had**
Be used to + -ing means 'be familiar with something'. The dinner is in the past, so: **wasn't used to eating**, and **had a hard time**. Not **didn't use**, because **use to** + verb is a different structure.

14. When the film finished, I _____ the alarm clock and _____ to bed.
✓ **B) set / went**
These are actions that happened one after another in the past, so use the **past simple**: **set** and **went**. **Set** has the same form in the present and past.

15. Janette _____ all her friends for advice before she _____ to quit her job.
✓ **A) had asked / decided**
Asking for advice happened before the decision, so use the **past perfect** (**had asked**) for the earlier action and the **past simple** (**decided**) for the later one.

16. In the past, land journeys _____ a very long time and they _____ very tiring.
✓ **C) used to take / were**
Used to + verb describes something that was usual in the past but is not true now: **used to take**. **Were** describes how they were in the past. Not **had taken**, because there is no other past action to come before.

17. They _____ the whole building by the time the fire _____ to all the floors.
✓ **B) had evacuated / spread**
By the time + past simple shows the later action (**spread**). The action completed before it uses the **past perfect**: **had evacuated**.

18. Liam _____ for ten hours, but he still _____ half of the distance by then.
✓ **D) had been driving / hadn't covered**
For ten hours up to a past moment (**by then**) needs the **past perfect continuous**: **had been driving**. **By then** also needs the **past perfect** for the result: **hadn't covered**.

19. I _____ to be able to concentrate on my work because I _____ enough sleep last night.
✓ **B) don't seem / didn't get**
The problem is now, so use the **present simple**: **don't seem**. **Last night** is finished past time, so use the **past simple**: **didn't get**. Not **haven't got**, because the present perfect is not used with **last night**.

20. When we _____ again, Steve and I _____ each other for more than fifteen years.
✓ **A) met / hadn't seen**
The meeting is a past event, so use **met**. The fifteen years without seeing each other came before that meeting, so use the **past perfect**: **hadn't seen**.

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