



learning target

Aim of this section is to learn the third way to speak about past events.

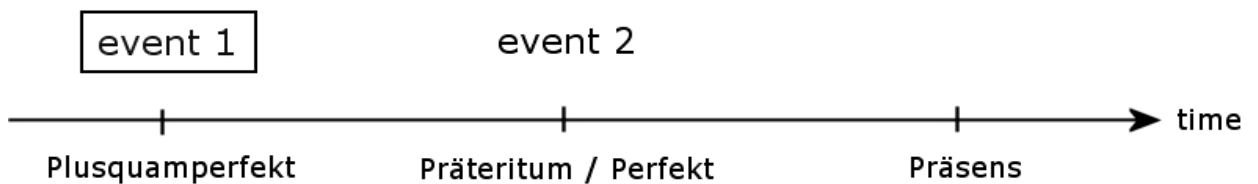
German	English
Er kaufte sich ein teures Auto, nachdem er im Lotto gewonnen hatte .	He bought an expensive car after he had won in the lottery.
Der Zug war schon abgefahren , als wir in den Bahnhof kamen.	The train had already departed when we came to the train station.
Bevor Cathy zu mir kam, hatte sie schon ein Jahr lang Deutsch gelernt .	Before Cathy came to me she had been learning German already for one year.

rules

When do you use the tense "Plusquamperfekt"?

The "Plusquamperfekt" is always used when you speak about a event in the past that had happened before another event in the past.

Another expression for the "Plusquamperfekt" is "Vorvergangenheit" ("pre past") which describes its purpose best. The "Plusquamperfekt" is rarely used.



example 1:

Als die Eltern das Haus **verlassen hatten**, schauten die Kinder die ganze Nacht fern.
 (When the parents had left the house the children watched tv all night.)

- event 1: the parents left the house
- event 2: the children watched tv
- both events happened in the past
- for event 1 you always use "Plusquamperfekt" and for event 2 "Präteritum" or "Perfekt"



example 2:

Nachdem sie das Visum **bekommen hatte**, ist sie sofort nach Deutschland geflogen.
(After she had got the visa she flew immediately to Germany.)

- event 1: she got the visa
- event 2: she flew to Germany
- both events happened in the past
- for event 1 you always use "Plusquamperfekt" and for event 2 "Präteritum" or "Perfekt"

Indicators for "Plusquamperfekt"

There is a row of conjunctions which are clear indicators for "Plusquamperfekt" :

- **nachdem** (=after)
- **als** (=when)
- **bevor** (=before)

examples:

- **Nachdem** ich die Prüfung **bestanden hatte**, habe ich eine große Party gemacht.
(After I had passed the exam I made a big party.)
- **Als** wir zur Party kamen, **waren** die meisten Leute schon **gegangen**.
(When we arrived at the party most people had gone already.)
- **Bevor** ich Cathy kennen lernte, **hatte** ich mich noch nie intensiv mit der deutschen Grammatik **beschäftigt**.
(Bevore I met Cathy I hadn't never dealt intensively with the German grammar.)

How do you form the tense "Plusquamperfekt"?

Hilfsverb im Präteritum

(auxiliary verb in past tense)

+ **Partizip II**

(past participle)

Hilfsverben (auxiliary verbs = "helping verbs")

There are two "Hilfsverben" in German:

- haben (have) --> Präteritum form: **hatte** (had)
- sein (be) --> Präteritum form: **war** (was)



When do you have to use "haben" and when "sein"?

- You use "sein" when the verb shows a change of position or condition e.g. gehen (go), kommen (come), wandern (hiking)
- You use "sein" when the verb shows a crossing of a "boundary" e.g. sterben (die), einschlafen (fall asleep)
- You use "sein" when the verb is an intransitive verb (=verb without direct object)

For all other cases use "haben" as "Hilfsverb".

Another useful rule is that almost all weak verbs (see below) take "haben" as their "Hilfsverb".
The only exception are the verbs "reisen" (travel) and "passieren" (happen).

examples:

- Ich **bin** gestern gekommen. (I arrived yesterday.)
- Er **ist** gerade gegangen. (He has just gone.)
- **Bist** du schon eingeschlafen? (Did you fall asleep already?)

The "Hilfsverb" is conjugated as usual. The main verb is transformed into the "Partizip II".

What is the "Partizip II" and how do you form it?

We spoke in detail about "*Partizip II*" when we learned the "Perfekt" tense.
Please check this topic for more information.