Here is an overview of the past tenses in English. Although there are only four past tenses in English, we use at least six tenses to talk about the future. The two present tenses that are used to talk about past events are the present perfect and present perfect continuous.

Here is a quick overview

**Past Simple**

The simple past tense is used to talk about finished actions which occurred at a specific point of time in the past.

Form: Subject + past simple form of the verb

- His father **died** last year.
- I **met** him yesterday.
- John **called** in the morning.

Questions and negatives are made with **did**.

- John **didn’t call** in the morning.
- **Did** you **see** him yesterday?

**Past continuous tense**

The past continuous tense is used to talk about actions and situations that were in progress at a particular point of time in the past.

Form: Subject + was / were + -ing form of the verb

- She **was cooking** dinner at 7 pm.
- I **was waiting** for a bus at 8 am.

Questions are made by putting **was** or **were** before the subject.

- What **was** she **doing** at 7 pm yesterday evening?
- **Was** she **washing** her clothes? No, she **was not washing** her clothes. She **was cooking** dinner.

**Past perfect tense**

The past perfect tense is used to talk about the earlier of two past events.

Form: Subject + had + past participle form of the verb
Past tenses overview

• She **had finished** that report before her boss came.
• They **had begun** the conference before I arrived.

**Past Perfect Continuous**

The past perfect continuous tense is used to talk about an activity that started in the past and continued up to another point of time in the past. This tense is also used to say that something had been going on before something else happened.

Form: Subject + had been + -ing form of the verb

• They **had been playing** when it started raining.