

The past perfect is simply the past that happened before the past: in English, a sentence like “After I had come home, the phone rang.” (The first part, had come, is the past perfect that had happened before the phone ringing.)

To form the past perfect, use the simple past of a helping verb (‘hatte’ or ‘war’) plus the participle ge-form:

Ich hatte das nie zuvor gesehen.

*I had never seen that before.*

Er hatte schon gegessen, bevor ich ankam.

*He had already eaten before I arrived.*

The only difference from English is that German has the possibility of ‘hatte’ or ‘war’ as the helping verb, just like in the normal *Perfekt* tense.

Verbs that involve a change of location or condition will use ‘war’, while all other verbs will use ‘hatte’.

Ich hatte meine Hausaufgaben gemacht.

*I had done my homework.*

Ich hatte den Film gesehen.

*I had seen the movie.*

Ich war nach Hause gekommen.

*I had come home.*

Ich war krank gewesen.

*I had been sick.*

To use the past perfect, simply decide whether the meaning of the verb should use ‘haben’ or ‘sein’ just as the normal *Perfekt* would. Then put the ‘haben’ or ‘sein’ helping verb into the past (‘hatte’ or ‘war’) and use the *Perfekt* ge-form participle at the end of the sentence.