

C. Simple Past

Simple past = *verb + -ed*, e.g., *talked, played, painted*

- Describes a **finished action in the past**.
- Usually identical to the past participle, e.g., *they have walked* and *they walked*. For a list of common irregular past participles, see p. 142.
- Most important **irregular verb** = *to be*, which becomes *was* (sing.) and *were* (pl.).

Dates and **time periods** are usually tip-offs that the simple past is required.

Correct: Around 500 BCE, the inhabitants of Central America **began** to cultivate the first tomatoes.

Correct: During the Middle Ages, many members of the nobility **lived** in castles.

D. Past Perfect

Past perfect = *had + past participle*, e.g., *had painted, had done, had grown*

- When a sentence refers to two finished actions, the past perfect is used to describe only the action that happened **first**.

Important: the phrase *by the time* is a tip-off that the past perfect is required. For example:

Martha Graham, an American dancer and choreographer, is known as one of the foremost pioneers of modern dance. Building upon the foundation of turn-of-the-century dancer Isadora Duncan, Graham brought this art form to a new level with her introduction of dance techniques that at first horrified and then later won over the American public. **By the time** she retired from the stage in 1970, she _____ hundreds of performances and permanently altered the course of dance in the United States.

1 Mark for Review

Which choice completes the text so that it conforms to the conventions of Standard English?

Ⓐ gave

Ⓑ will give

Ⓒ had given

Ⓓ would have given

The presence of the phrase *by the time* in the passage indicates that the past perfect is required. You can also think of it this way: logically, Martha Graham must have given hundreds of performances (action #1) before she retired (action #2). (C) is thus correct.