

7.4.2 Demystifying “have had”, “has had” and “had had”

We learnt in the sections above that *have/has/had* is used to depict *perfect* tenses. Specifically, the grammatical construct of:

- i. *Present perfect* tense is: *have/has + past participle*
- ii. *Past perfect* tense is: *had + past participle*

In addition to their role of depicting *perfect* tenses, *have/has/had* can also be used as *verbs*, depicting the meaning of *possession / ownership*, as depicted in examples below:

I have a pen.

- This sentence is in *simple present* tense (and *not* in past perfect). In this sentence, *have* is used as a *verb*, depicting the meaning of *possession*, to convey that I am in *possession* of a pen. In other words, *have* here is used as *simple present verb* and *not* as an indicator of *perfect tense*.

I had a pen.

- This sentence is in *simple past* tense (and *not* in past perfect). In this sentence, *had* is used as a *verb*, depicting the meaning of *possession*, to convey that I was in *possession* of a pen. In other words, *had* here is used as *simple past verb* and *not* as an indicator of *perfect tense*.

As the table below depicts, when *have/has* appear as verbs, their *simple past tense verb* is *had* and the corresponding past participle form is also *had*.

Simple Present (verb)	Simple Past (verb)	Past Participle
Have	Had	had
Has	Had	had

Let's look at few examples.

I have had a pen for five years.

- This sentence is in *present perfect* tense. In this sentence, *have* indicates that the sentence is in a *perfect tense*, while *had* is the *past participle* (as shown in above table). So, this sentence depicts scenario-3 of *present perfect* (section 7.1.4): *an event started in the past and is still continuing*. In this sentence, the act of my possessing the pen started five years ago and is still continuing; in other words, I *still* possess the pen.

Maria has had cold for past one week.

- This sentence is in *present perfect* tense. In this sentence, *has* indicates that the sentence is in a *perfect tense*, while *had* is the *past participle* (as shown in above table). So, this sentence depicts scenario-3 of *present perfect* (section 7.1.4): *an event started in the past and is still continuing*. In this sentence, the act of Maria suffering from cold started one week back and is still continuing; in other words, Maria *still* has cold.

I had had that pen for five years, before I lost it.

- This sentence is in *past perfect* tense. In this sentence, the first *had* indicates that the sentence is in a *perfect tense*, while the second *had* is the *past participle* (as shown in above table). So, this sentence depicts scenario-1 of *past perfect* (section 7.1.5): *an event that happened at some point “before” another event in the past*. In this sentence, the act of my possessing the pen lasted for five years ago, until I lost the pen.