

13.1.3 Mixed, with weak past but strong past participle

bakken	bakte/bakten	heeft gebakken	to fry, to bake
lachen	lachte/lachten	heeft gelachen	to laugh
heten	heette/heetten	heeft geheten	to be called
scheiden	scheidde/scheidden	heeft gescheiden	to separate
wassen	waste/wasten	heeft gewassen	to wash

13.1.4

The two most common verbs also form their past tense and past participle irregularly:

hebben	had, hadden	heeft gehad	to have
zijn	wās, wāren	is geweest	to be

Like English was/were, the singular gets an s, and the plural an r.

zien: short vowel in singular and long vowel in plural of the simple past:

Gisteren zăg hij ons in de bioscoop, maar wij zāgen hem niet.

He saw us at the movies yesterday, but we didn't see him.

13.1.5 Let's try it

Fill in the table.

<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Simple past singular</i>	<i>Simple past plural</i>	<i>Past participle</i>
staan			
vragen			
lachen			
zien			
zijn			

13.2 Past perfect tense

Simple past of **hebben/zijn** + past participle

Hij was naar Parijs gegaan.

He had gone to Paris.

The past perfect tense is formed by using the past tense of the auxiliaries **hebben** or **zijn** and the past participle of the action verb:

Ik had een brief geschreven.

I had written a letter.

Had ze dat al gehoord?

Had she already heard that?

Zij waren nog niet gekomen.

They had not come yet.

Hij was naar Wassenaar gegaan.

He had gone to Wassenaar.

Zij had nog nooit Nederlands gehoord.

She had never heard Dutch.

13.3 Use of the tenses

Although the Dutch **ik schreef** has been rendered here by “I wrote” and **ik heb geschreven** by “I have written,” the Dutch usage of the simple past and perfect tenses does not correspond as closely to English usage as we imply by this.

13.3.1 Simple past

The simple past is used to describe different actions in the past.

To describe a habit from the past:

Toen ik klein was, woonde ik in Amsterdam.

When I was small, I lived in Amsterdam.

Vroeger at ik elke dag een appel.

I used to eat an apple every day.

To describe something in general:

Er zaten veel mensen te wachten.

A lot of people were waiting.

Like English, Dutch uses the simple past for the narration of a series of events in the past:

Hij ging naar de stad, kocht een jas, zag zijn vriend, praatte met hem en kwam toen terug.

He went downtown, bought a coat, saw his friend and talked with him and then came back.

13.3.2 Present perfect

The present perfect is used in the following cases.

To illustrate that a situation is finished:

Wij hebben 5 jaar in Utrecht gewoond.

We lived for 5 years in Utrecht.

Hij heeft zijn huiswerk gemaakt.

He did his homework.

To illustrate that an action is over and done with:

Ik heb mijn auto gewassen.

I washed my car.

Hij heeft de woonkamer schoongemaakt.

He cleaned the living room.

To illustrate an action that is not performed daily and took place in the past:

Vorige week heb ik een nieuwe computer gekocht.

Last week, I bought a new computer.

For the expression of isolated events in the past, Dutch generally uses the perfect tense, whereas English tends to use the perfect tense only for a more indefinite past time without specific connection to the present.

Ik heb hem gisteren gezien.

I saw him yesterday.

We hebben ons kopje koffie in de kamer gedronken.

We drank our cup of coffee in the living room.

Hij is om de hoek verdwenen.

He disappeared around the corner.

Ik heb hem nooit gezien.

I have never seen him.

Ik heb haar daar vaak ontmoet.

I have often met her there.

Note: The English versions of the first three examples would not sound right in the perfect tense.

When a verb describes an action that began in the past and continues at the present time, Dutch requires the present tense, usually accompanied by **nu** or **al**, whereas English uses the perfect tense:

Wij zijn al twee maanden in Nederland.

We have been in the Netherlands for two months.

Ik wacht al een uur op je!

I have been waiting an hour for you!

Hij is al jaren weg.

He has been gone for years.

Note: Dutch uses the perfect tense more and the simple past correspondingly less than English.

13.3.3 Past perfect

The past perfect is used for an event that takes place in the past before another past event takes place. In this respect, Dutch and English correspond with one another:

Hij had de was gedaan, toen zij telefoneerde.

He had done his laundry when she called.

Nadat ik had afgewassen, belde ik mijn moeder.

After I had done the dishes, I called my mother.

Zij vertelde dat zij vorige week in New York was geweest.

She said that she had been in New York last week.

Note on word order

Just as in the present perfect, the conjugated auxiliary (**hebben/zijn**) is in second position in the main clause. If there is a dependent clause, as in **toen zij telefoneerde**, the conjugated verb goes at the *end* of the dependent clause.

13.3.4 Let's try it

Fill in the simple past and past perfect where appropriate:

- 1 Vanmorgen (**moeten**) ik naar de tandarts. Ik (**zijn**) nog nooit eerder bij haar.
- 2 Nadat ik mijn boodschappen (**doen**), (**gaan**) ik bij De Poort lunchen.
- 3 In de vakantie (**lezen**) ik de nieuwste roman van Mulisch.* Ik (**horen**) er al veel over.
- 4 Vroeger (**lopen**) ik graag een uur langs het strand. Mijn vriendin (**gaan**) dan vaak mee.
- 5 Toen wij klein (**zijn**), (**lezen**) wij elke dag een stukje in de bijbel.
- 6 Voordat Ali naar Nederland (**komen**), (**horen**) hij nog nooit Nederlands.
- 7 Hij (**vragen**) of zij vorige week in Chicago een leuke tijd (**hebben**).
- 8 De docent (**stellen**) een vraag die niemand (**begrijpen**).

13.4 Verb plus preposition

Many verbs are commonly used together with a particular preposition, the selection of which is not predictable from a knowledge of English. These combinations can only be learned individually. (For more about prepositions, see Chapter 19.)

A few examples of verbs with their most usual preposition are given here:

Zij hebben het over het weer.

They are talking about the weather.

Zij wacht al een uur op me.

She has been waiting for me for an hour.

Hij vraagt om het adres.

He asks for the address.

* Harry Mulisch (born 29 July 1927) is a Dutch author. Along with W.F. Hermans and Gerard Reve, he is considered one of the "Great Three" of Dutch postwar literature. He has written novels, plays, essays, poems and philosophical reflections. Two of his most well-known novels are *De Aanslag* (The Assault, 1982) and *De Ontdekking van de Hemel* (The Discovery of Heaven, 1992).