Communicative Grammar Self-Test Exercises on past simple and past perfect

Here is an account of a medical camp conducted by NSS volunteers:

Last Saturday, we **___1___** a medial camp at Odandurai village. The team **___2___** of the NSS coordinator and 20 volunteers, and a doctor. Our coordinator **had already written** to the headman of the village about the camp. Before we **reached** the village, people **___3___** there.

Ten of our volunteers **___4___** to them freely explaining how we would help them. They **said** that they **had brought** a medicine **chest** that contained tablets for common **ailments** of the people of that village. One in the medical team **asked** for four young persons from the village who **___5___** up to X Std. To our amazement more than ten **__6____** forward. We **appreciated** their enthusiasm and **___7___** four from among them. Two of our team **were teaching** those young persons about the uses of the medicines.

In the meantime, another team of volunteers went into the village to get the patients to the village school where we **___8___.** The doctor with the medical team **examined** them and **__9____** them medicines. The four persons who we **had asked** to treat common diseases **were** carefully observing the prescriptions given by the doctor. The doctor **handed** over the chest to one of the four young villagers.

The medical camp **came** to an end around six in the evening. The patients who **___10___** had returned to their slums **came** back to bid farewell to us.

1. A. conduct B. conducted C. have conducted D. had conducted
2. A. have consisted B. consist C. consisted D. had consisted
3. A. have gathered B. gather C. gathered D. had gathered
4. A. speak B. had spoken C. spoke D. have spoken
5. A. have studied B. study C. studied D. had studied
6. A. come B. had come C. came D. have come

7. A. selected B. have selected C. had selected D. select
8. A. have camped B. camp C. had camped D. camped
9. A. gave B. have given C. had given D. give
10. A. had returned B. returned C. have returned D. return

Narrating an event:

While narrating an event, that took place in a sequence in the past, we use the simple past tense. So the past tense is also called ‘narrative tense’.

The simple past may also describe events that are repeated and regular.

Example: When I **lived** in London, I **ate** fish and chips for breakfast every day.

The past perfect tense:

The past perfect is used to express an action that happened before another action in a definite time in the past. We can use it to reorder the events of a narrative for dramatic effect.

Examples:

1. When we **reached** the village, people **had gathered** there.
2. After Alice **had said** goodbye to her father, she **got** into the compartment.

- From the above examples it can be seen that out of the two happenings that took place in the past, the earlier one takes the **past perfect** while the latter one the **simple past**.

More uses of the past perfect

1. To indicate a past hope, expectation or intention (that was not realized) the past perfect is used. Using verbs such as hope, expect, think, intend, mean and suppose.

   Example: I **had hoped** you would inform me before joining the Science group. (But you didn’t)

- To express hypothetical conditions, the past perfect is used.

Examples:

2. If you **had woken up early in the morning,** you wouldn't have missed the bus. (You missed it).
3. If they **had gone** to bed early, they **would not have woken** up late.
4. **Had** they **gone** to bed early, they **would not have** woken up late. (they didn't go to bed early, so they woke up late)

Self-Test Exercise

Instructions: Fill in the blanks using the correct form of the verb in brackets and then role-play in pairs.

The doctor and the patient:
Doctor: What is your problem?
Patient: I ..... (have) stomach ache.
Doctor: What did you eat yesterday?
Patient: I ..... (eat) some stale bread, not yesteray, but the day before.
Doctor: Stale bread? That's it.
Doctor: What time did the pain start?
Patient: It ..... (start) yesterday morning itself.
Doctor: If you .....(come) yesterday, it would have been easier for me to cure.

N.B. The past perfect is used to talk about an action that happened before something else in the past.
Examples:
1. After the exams **had finished**, the students **had** a party.
2. When we **had done** the washing-up, we watched TV.
3. When the students **arrived**, class **had started**.

We use the present perfect tense to say that a finished action or event is connected with the present in some way.
Example: Machine civilisation has improved our lives tremendously. (Meaning: Improvement started in the past and continues till the present time. It is likely that it may continue into future time too.)
N.B. If we say something has happened, we are thinking about the **past** and the **present** at **the same time.**