

THE PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

ACTIVITY TYPE

Reading, Writing, Grammar,
Exercises

LANGUAGE FOCUS

The past perfect continuous

AIM

To learn and practice the past
perfect continuous in English

LEVEL

Intermediate, Advanced

TIME

60 minutes

INTRODUCTION

After going through your regular review and teacher talk, tell the students that they're going to learn the past perfect continuous in English

PREPARATION

Make one copy of the worksheet for each student

PROCEDURE

Give one copy of the worksheet to each student.
Go through the grammar and exercises together.

WRAPUP

Ask the students if they have any doubts.
Thank them for coming to the lesson.

Past Perfect Continuous

FORM Past Perfect Continuous

[HAD BEEN] + [VERB+ing]

EXAMPLES:

I had been waiting there for two hours before she finally arrived.

She had only been studying English for two years before she got the job.

NOTE: When you are using a verb tense with more than one part such as Past Perfect Continuous (had been studying), adverbs often come between the first part and the second part (had only been studying).

USE 1 Duration Before Something in
the Past



We use the Past Perfect Continuous to show that something started in the past and continued up until another time in the past. "For five minutes" and "for two weeks" are both durations which can be used with the Past Perfect Continuous. Notice that this is related to the Present Perfect Continuous; however, the duration does not continue until now.

EXAMPLES:

They had been talking for over an hour before Tony arrived.

She had been working at that company for three years when it went out of business.

James had been teaching at the University for more than a year before he left for Asia.

USE 2 Cause of Something in the Past

Using the Past Perfect Continuous before another action in the past is a good way to show cause and effect.

EXAMPLES:

Jason was tired because he had been jogging.

Sam gained weight because he had been overeating.

IMPORTANT

If you do not include a duration such as "for five minutes," "for two weeks" or "since Friday", many English speakers choose to use the Past Continuous. There is also a difference in meaning. Compare the examples below.

EXAMPLES:

I was reading when my roommate returned.

The reading will be interrupted.

I had been reading *for an hour* when my roommate returned.

The reading stopped just before my roommate returned.

Exercises

Write the verbs into the correct form (past perfect continuous).

1. We (sleep) _____ for 12 hours when he woke us up.
2. They (wait) _____ at the station for 90 minutes when the train finally arrived.
3. We (look for) _____ her ring for two hours and then we found it in the bathroom.
4. I (not / walk) _____ for a long time, when it suddenly began to rain.
5. How long (learn / she) _____ English before she went to London?
6. Frank Sinatra caught the flu because he (sing) _____ in the rain too long.
7. He (drive) _____ less than an hour when he ran out of petrol.
8. They were very tired in the evening because they (help) _____ on the farm all day.



9. I (not / work) _____ all day; so I wasn't tired and went to the disco at night.
10. They (cycle) _____ all day so their legs were sore in the evening.
11. Laura needed a break because she (study) _____ all morning.
12. Lorraine (learn) _____ English for 12 years before she moved to England.
13. I did not go out last night because I (work) _____ all day.
14. Orla felt fit for the marathon because she (train) _____ a lot.
15. When I went to see Ms Winter, her secretary told me that she (speak) _____ on the phone for two hours.
16. You got sick because you (eat) _____ the whole time.
17. The musician (live) _____ in this town for ten years when he became director of the opera house.
18. We (go) _____ out with each other for two years before I met his family.



19. The passengers (wait) _____ for four hours before the ground staff could finally give them information on the delay of their flight.
20. I (drive) _____ in the wrong direction for an hour before I noticed my mistake.

Complete the sentences in the past perfect continuous positive

1. I _____ (work) all day, so I didn't want to go out.
2. She _____ (sleep) for ten hours when I woke her.
3. They _____ (live) in Beijing for three years when he lost his job.
4. When we met, you _____ (work) at that company for six months.
5. We _____ (eat) all day, so we felt a bit ill.
6. He was red in the face because he _____ (run).
7. It _____ (rain), and the road was covered in water.
8. I was really tired because I _____ (study).
9. We _____ (go) out for three years when we got married.

Complete the sentences in the past perfect continuous negative

1. I _____ (not / work) there long when she quit.
2. She _____ (not / work) but she was tired anyway.
3. It _____ (not / rain) long when I got home.
4. He was in trouble with the teacher because he _____ (not / go) to classes.
5. We _____ (not / live) in London for three years when we got married! It was more like five years.
6. Although it was hot in the kitchen, Julie _____ (not / cook).
7. I _____ (not / sleep) long when there was a knock at the door.
8. He didn't feel healthy, because he _____ (not / go) to the gym.
9. I caught a cold because I _____ (not / eat) properly.

Complete the sentences in the past perfect continuous question

1. When you got sick, _____ (you / eat) enough?
2. There was water everywhere, _____ (what / the children / do)?
3. _____ (it / rain) when you left the restaurant?
4. _____ (how long / she / live) in London when she found that job?
5. _____ (why / you / study) so hard?
6. Why was the house so messy? _____ (what / she / do)?
7. _____ (how long / we / wait) when the bus finally arrived?
8. _____ (how long / he / play) football when he was injured?
9. _____ (I / work) that day?
10. _____ (she / see) him for long when they moved to Paris?