

The Past Perfect Continuous Tense

Introduction

1) We use the past perfect continuous when we talk about an action (quite a long one) which began in the past and continued up until another time in the past. Unlike the present perfect continuous, which indicates an action that began in the past and continued up to the present, the past perfect continuous indicates something that began in the past, continued in the past, and also ended at a defined point in the past.

Sammy had been playing with his food when his mom walked into the kitchen.

2) The past perfect continuous is formed using *had + been + present participle*. Questions are indicated by inverting the subject and *had*. Negatives are made with *not*. Contracted forms are used.

(+) *Tom was very tired when he got home. He had been working all day./He'd been working all day.*

(-) *Tom wasn't very tired when he got home. He hadn't been working all day.*

(?) *Why was Tom tired when he got home? Had he been working all day?*

Compare the present perfect continuous (I have been doing) and the past perfect continuous (I had been doing):

Present	Past
<i>-I hope the bus comes soon. We've been waiting for 30 minutes. (before now)</i>	<i>-At last the bus came. We'd been waiting for 30 minutes. (before the bus came)</i>
<i>-Lilly is out of breath. She has been running.</i>	<i>-Lilly was out of breath. She had been running.</i>

Some **time markers** can emphasize the duration of the action. These **time markers** are *all day, all morning, for days, for ages etc.* You can also use time markers to say that something had been happening for a period of time before something else happened:

*Samantha went to the doctor last Monday. She hadn't been feeling well **for some time**.*

*My sister had been playing with her friends outside **for an hour when** it started to rain heavily.*

Remember that **non-continuous verbs (e.g. to love, hate, know, want etc.)** are not used in any continuous tenses. Use the past perfect instead.

We were good friends. ~~We had been knowing each other for years.~~ We had known each other for years.

Short Story Dialogue

– It seemed to me that your brother was depressed a year ago.

*– Yeah, **he'd been feeling down since he lost his job.** Could you just imagine that? He got a perfect job at one startup company, the launch was going smoothly. And then 7 months later they lost the funding.*

*– **So at the time the company lost the funding, your brother had been working there for 7 months?***

*– Correct. We know that it seemed like such a short period of time for some people, **but my brother had been dreaming about that amazing job opportunity for years.***

– Yeah, I understand that.

Independent Practice - Past perfect continuous tense

1) Make sentences using the words in brackets.

a. I had to cancel my trip due to work. (I/to plan/this trip/for months).
b. Mike didn't hear Lucy when she asked for help in the kitchen. (He/to listen to music/in his room).
c. I was extremely tired when I got home. (I/to work hard/all day).
d. When I entered the room, Kate turned off the TV. (She/to watch/a soap opera).

2) Put the verbs into the past perfect (I had done) or the past perfect continuous (I had been doing) form.

- a. We were good friends. (we/to know) each other for nearly a decade.
- b. I was annoyed because my friends were late and (I/to wait) for an hour.
- c. Pupils were sitting on the ground. They were out of breath. (they/to run)

3) Read the situations and complete the sentences.

- a. We played beach volleyball yesterday. Half an hour after we began playing, it started to rain.
We for half an hour when it started to rain.
- b. My aunt got a job at the supermarket. Two years later it closed down.
At the time the supermarket closed down, my aunt there for two years.
- c. The band started playing and after about 15 minutes the singer showed up.
At the time the singer showed up, the band for about 15 minutes.

Independent Practice: Answers - Past perfect continuous tense

1) Make sentences using the words in brackets.

- a. I had to cancel my trip due to work. **I'd been planning this trip for months.**
- b. Mike didn't hear Lucy when she asked for help in the kitchen. **He'd been listening to music in his room.**
- c. I was extremely tired when I got home. **I'd been working hard all day.**
- d. When I entered the room, Kate turned off the TV. **She'd been watching a soap opera.**

2) Put the verbs into the past perfect (I had done) or the past perfect continuous (I had been doing) form.

- a. We were good friends. **We had known** each other for nearly a decade.
- b. I was annoyed because my friends were late and **I'd been waiting** for an hour.
- c. Pupils were sitting on the ground. They were out of breath. **They'd been running.**

3) Read the situations and complete the sentences.

- a. We **had been playing** for half an hour when it started to rain.
- b. At the time the supermarket closed down, my aunt **had been working** there for two years.
- c. At the time the singer showed up, the band **had been playing** for about 15 minutes.