

# Past Perfect Continuous (*I had been doing*)

**A**

Study this example situation:



*Yesterday morning*

Yesterday morning I got up and looked out the window. The sun was shining, but the ground was very wet.

It **had been raining**.

It was not raining when I looked out the window; the sun was shining. But it **had been raining** before.

**Had been -ing** is the *past perfect continuous*:

I/we/you/they he/she/it	had	(= I'd, etc.) (= he'd, etc.)	been	doing working playing, etc.
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Here are some more examples:

- When the boys came into the house, their clothes were dirty, their hair was messy, and one of them had a black eye. They'd **been fighting**.
- I was very tired when I got home. I'd **been working** hard all day.

**B**

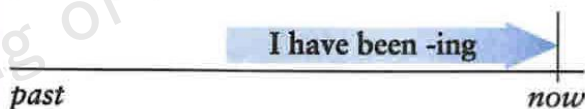
You can say that something **had been happening** for a period of time before something else happened:

- We'd **been playing** tennis for about half an hour when it started to rain heavily.
- Jim quit drinking coffee two years ago. He'd **been drinking** coffee for 20 years.

**C**

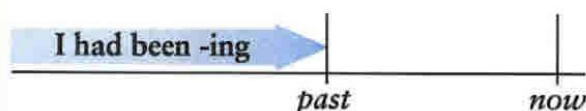
Compare **have been -ing** and **had been -ing**:

*present perfect continuous*



- I hope the bus comes soon. I've **been waiting** for 20 minutes. (*before now*)
- He's out of breath. He **has been running**.

*past perfect continuous*



- At last the bus came. I'd **been waiting** for 20 minutes. (*before the bus came*)
- He was out of breath. He **had been running**.

**D**

Compare **had been doing** and **was doing** (*past continuous*):

- It wasn't raining when we went out. The sun was **shining**. But it **had been raining**, so the ground was wet.
- Stephanie was sitting in an armchair resting. She was tired because she'd **been working** very hard.

**E**

Some verbs (for example, know and want) are not normally used in the continuous:

- We were good friends. We **had known** each other for years. (*not had been knowing*)

For a list of these verbs, see Unit 4A.

# Exercises

## 15.1 Read the situations and make sentences from the words in parentheses.

1. I was very tired when I got home.  
(I / work / hard all day) I had been working hard all day.
2. The two boys came into the house. They had a soccer ball, and they were both very tired.  
(they / play / soccer) \_\_\_\_\_
3. There was nobody in the room, but there was a smell of cigarette smoke.  
(somebody / smoke / in the room) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Ann woke up in the middle of the night. She was frightened and didn't know where she was.  
(she / dream) \_\_\_\_\_
5. When I got home, Mike was sitting in front of the TV. He had just turned it off.  
(he / watch / TV) \_\_\_\_\_

## 15.2 Read the situations and complete the sentences.

1. We played tennis yesterday. Half an hour after we began playing, it started to rain.  
We had been playing for half an hour when it started to rain.
2. I had arranged to meet Robert in a restaurant. I arrived and waited for him. After 20 minutes I suddenly realized that I was in the wrong restaurant.  
I \_\_\_\_\_ for 20 minutes when I \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Sarah got a job in a factory. Five years later the factory closed down.  
At the time the factory \_\_\_\_\_, Sarah \_\_\_\_\_ there for five years.
4. I went to a concert last week. The orchestra began playing. After about ten minutes a man in the audience suddenly began shouting.  
The orchestra \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.

## 15.3 Put the verb into the most appropriate form, past continuous (*I was doing*), past perfect (*I had done*), or past perfect continuous (*I had been doing*).

1. It was very noisy next door. Our neighbors were having (have) a party.
2. We were good friends. We had known (know) each other for a long time.
3. John and I went for a walk. I had trouble keeping up with him because he \_\_\_\_\_ (walk) so fast.
4. Sue was sitting on the ground. She was out of breath. She \_\_\_\_\_ (run).
5. When I arrived, everybody was sitting around the table with their mouths full. They \_\_\_\_\_ (eat).
6. When I arrived, everybody was sitting around the table and talking. Their mouths were empty, but their stomachs were full. They \_\_\_\_\_ (eat).
7. Brian was on his hands and knees on the floor. He \_\_\_\_\_ (look) for his contact lens.
8. When I arrived, Kate \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for me. She was upset with me because I was late and she \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for a very long time.
9. I was sad when I sold my car. I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) it for a very long time.
10. We were extremely tired at the end of our trip. We \_\_\_\_\_ (travel) for more than 24 hours.