

English Verbs: Past Perfect Continuous

["had been" + present participle] (for action verbs only)

- I **had been waiting** for a long time when she finally arrived.
- **Had you been waiting** for a long time when she arrived?
- I **hadn't been waiting** for a long time when she arrived.

1. Duration before an Event in the Past

We use the Past Perfect Continuous to show that something started in the past and continued until another time or event in the past. It is sometimes used to show that an action was interrupted. It's common to use when telling stories.



Examples:

- They **had been talking** for over an hour before Tony arrived.
- She **had been working** at that company for three years when it collapsed.
- How long **had you been waiting** before the bus arrived?
- Mike wanted to sit down because he **had been standing** all day at work.
- James **had been teaching** at the university for 2 years before he went to Asia.
- A: How long **had you been studying** Turkish before you moved to Ankara?
B: I **had been studying** Turkish for six months.

2. Cause of an Event in the Past

Using the Past Perfect Continuous before a result/state in the past is a good way to show cause and effect. We can use "because" or "so" to join the two clauses.

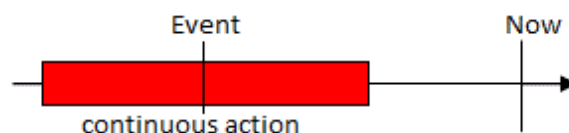
Examples:

- Jason was tired because he **had been jogging**.
or: Jason **had been jogging**, so he was tired.
- John was drunk because he **had been drinking** all night.
or: John **had been drinking** all night. so he was drunk.
- Sam was fat because he **had been overeating**.
- Betty failed the final test because she **had not been studying**.

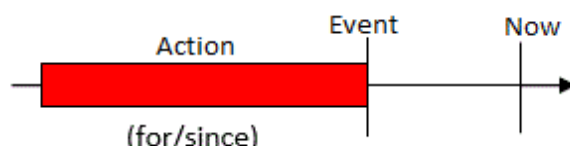
Past Continuous vs. Past Perfect Continuous

Past Continuous emphasizes interrupted actions, whereas Past Perfect Continuous emphasizes a duration of time before a time in the past. Examples:

- He **was exercising** when the phone rang. / While he **was exercising**, the phone rang.
This sentence says that he was exercising at the moment that the telephone rang. The continuous action was interrupted. The duration of the action is not important.



- He **had been exercising** before the telephone rang.
This sentence says that he was exercising until the telephone rang. Then he stopped.



Exercise 1. Complete the following using the “past perfect continuous”:

1. He woke up with many pains because he _____ in a disco the night before. (dance)
2. She _____ for her watch for half an hour when her brother found it. (look)
3. They _____ for ages so they decided to sit down for a while. (walk)
4. When we arrived at the bus station, we discovered that our parents _____ (wait) for three hours.
5. We _____ the Changing of the Guards for five minutes when we were told that we had to leave. (watch)
6. She _____ her house before she fell off the ladder. (decorate)

Exercise 2. Complete the following using the “past perfect simple” or the “past perfect continuous”:

I'm sorry that I went without you last night, but I told you to meet me early because the show started at 8pm. I _____ (try) to get tickets for that play for months, because I didn't want to miss it. When I finally left the coffee shop , I _____ (drink) five cups of coffee and I _____ (wait) for over an hour. I eventually had to leave because I _____ (arrange) to meet Kathy in front of the theater. When I arrived at the theater, Kathy _____ (buy, already) the tickets and she was waiting for us near the entrance. She was really angry because she _____ (wait) for more nearly an hour. She said that she _____ (give, almost) up and _____ (go) into the theater without us. Kathy told me that you _____ (be) late several times in the past and that she would not make any plans with you again in the future. She also said that she _____ (miss) several movies because of your late arrivals. In the future, I suggest you arrive on time!

Suggested videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ey0JqLSfCdA>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-W_MEo5s0U

More exercises: www.englishpage.com/verbpage/verbtenseintro.html (Exercises 13-15)

Perfect Continuous structures:

Past:	1 month ago, you	had been taking	classes with me for 5 years.
Present:	(Today) you	have been taking	classes with me for over 5 years.
Future:	Next year, you	will have been taking	classes with me for 6 years.