

Past perfect continuous (I had been doing)

A Study this example situation:

yesterday morning

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

It **had been raining**.

It was *not* raining when I looked out of 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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Some more examples:

- ☐ My hands were dirty because I'd **been repairing** my bike.
- ☐ Tom was tired when he got home. He'd **been working** hard all day.
- ☐ I went to Madrid a few years ago and stayed with a friend of mine. **She hadn't been living** there very long, but she knew the city very well.

You can say that something **had been happening** before something else happened:

- ☐ We'd **been playing** tennis for about half an hour when it **started** to rain heavily.

B Compare **have been -ing** (*present perfect continuous*) and **had been -ing** (*past perfect continuous*):*Present perfect continuous*

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

Past perfect continuous

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

C Compare **was -ing** (*past continuous*) and **had been -ing**:

- ☐ It **wasn't raining** when we went out. The sun **was shining**. But it **had been raining**, so the ground was wet.
- ☐ Katherine **was lying** on the sofa. She was tired because she'd **been working** hard.

D Some verbs (for example, **know**) are not normally used in *continuous* forms (**be + -ing**):

- ☐ We were good friends. We **had known** each other for years. (*not had been knowing*)
- ☐ A few years ago Lisa cut her hair really short. I was surprised because she'd always **had** long hair. (*not she'd been having*)

For a list of these verbs, see **Unit 4A**. For **have**, see **Unit 17**

Exercises

16.1 Read the situations and make sentences using the words in brackets.

- Tom was very tired when he got home.
(He / work / hard all day) He'd been working hard all day.
- The children came into the house. They had a football and they were both very tired.
(They / play / football)
- I was disappointed when I had to cancel my holiday.
(I / look / forward to it)
- Anna woke up in the middle of the night. She was frightened and didn't know where she was.
(She / have / a bad dream)
- When I got home, Mark was sitting in front of the TV. He had just turned it off.
(He / watch / a film)
- The people waiting at the bus stop were getting impatient. The bus was very late.
(They / wait / a long time)

16.2 Read the situations and complete the sentences.

- We played tennis yesterday. We didn't finish our game.
We'd been playing (We / play) for half an hour when it started (it / start) to rain.
- I had arranged to meet Tom in a restaurant. I arrived and waited for him to come.
..... (I / wait) for 20 minutes when
(I / realise) that (I / be) in the wrong restaurant.
- Sarah worked in a company for a long time. The company no longer exists.
At the time the company (go) out of business, Sarah
..... (work) there for twelve years.
- I went to a concert. Soon after the orchestra began playing, something strange happened.
The orchestra (play) for about ten minutes when a man in
the audience suddenly (start) shouting.

Now make your own sentence:

- I began walking along the road. I
when

16.3 Which is right?

- It was noisy next door last night. Our neighbours were having / ~~had been having~~ a party.
(were having is correct)
- At the end of our journey we were extremely tired. We were travelling / We'd been travelling for more than 24 hours.
- James was on his hands and knees on the floor. He was looking / He'd been looking for his contact lens.
- Sue was sitting on the ground. She was out of breath. She was running / She'd been running.
- John and I went for a walk. He was walking / He'd been walking very fast and I had difficulty keeping up with him.
- I was sad when I sold my car. I've had it / I'd had it for a very long time.
- I was sad when my local cafe closed. I was going / I'd been going there for many years.
- I'm running a marathon next month. I've been training / I'd been training for it every day.
- I had arranged to meet Kate, but I was late. When I finally arrived, she was waiting / she'd been waiting for me. She was annoyed because she was waiting / she'd been waiting such a long time.
- 10a Joe and I work for the same company. He joined the company before me. When I started a few years ago, he was already working / he'd already been working there.
- 10b I started working at the company a few years ago. At the time I started, Joe was already working / had already been working there for two years.
- 10c Joe still works for the company. He's been working / He'd been working there a long time now.