



Past Perfect Continuous Tense

Grammar > Advanced 7



Exercise 1 – Learning

How to Form the Past Perfect Continuous Tense

Positive form: **had been + verb-ing**

- I **had been teaching** English for five years before I quit. (I'**d been teaching** English for five years before I quit.)
- You **had been teaching** English for five years before I quit. (You'**d been teaching** English for five years before I quit.)
- He/She/It **had been teaching** English for five years before I quit. (He/She/It'**d been teaching** English for five years before I quit.)
- We **had been teaching** English for five years before I quit. (We'**d been teaching** English for five years before I quit.)
- They **had been teaching** English for five years before I quit. (They'**d been teaching** English for five years before I quit.)



Tip: The short form for '**had**' is '-**d**'. Be careful not to confuse it with '**would**'. Would is always followed by the infinitive, but '**had**' is followed by the past participle.

Negative form: **had + not + been + verb-ing**

- I **had not been working** there long when she quit. (I **hadn't been working** there long when she quit.)
- It **had not been raining** long when I got home. (It **hadn't been raining** long when I got home.)

Interrogative form: '**the subject**' and '**had**' switch places

- **Had I been working** that day?
- **Had you been working** for fifteen years before resigning?
- **Had it been raining** when you left the restaurant?

Tip: Do not use Past Perfect Continuous with **stative verbs**, such as '**be**', '**like**', '**have**', '**live**', '**know**', and '**believe**'. These verbs describe a state of the being and not an action, so they do not need the continuous form.



Past Perfect Continuous Tense Usage

This tense is used:

1. When an action started and ended in the past.

- **Past Continuous:** The children are tired now because they **were playing** outside all day.
(The children were playing outside until now.)
- **Past Perfect Continuous:** The children **were** tired yesterday because they **had been playing** outside all day.
(The children started and stopped playing yesterday.)

2. With the duration of the action and the result of the action.

- I **had been studying** English for five years *when I moved to London*.
- Jane **had been swimming** for a decade *when she won a gold medal at the Olympics*.
- Our dog **had been attending** training classes for a month *before he finally learned to sit*.
- The architect **had been designing** buildings for sixty years *before he retired*.



Exercise 2 – Fill in the Blanks

Fill in the blanks with the past perfect continuous form of the verb in brackets.

1. They _____ for their cat for three days until it suddenly reappeared. (look)
2. We _____ the world for ten months when we ran out of money. (travel)
3. We _____ at the bus stop for half an hour when the bus finally arrived. (wait)
4. I caught a cold because I _____ properly. (not eat)
5. He _____ for the same company for ten years when he was laid off. (work)
6. It _____ for a week before the sun finally came out again. (rain)
7. I _____ the whole day, so my legs were tired. (stand)
8. She looked tired but she _____. (not study)



Exercise 3 – Sentence Construction

Use what you learned in class to create sentences with your tutor.

Example: work, got promoted. → I had been working for five years when I got promoted.

Content:

1. use that computer, bought new computer.
2. learn English, moved to Chicago.
3. write novels, became famous.
4. date each other, got married.
5. sing on the street, was discovered.
6. play the guitar, held a concert.