

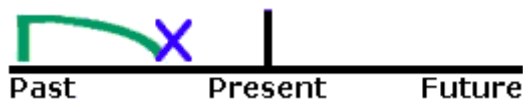
Past Perfect Continuous

HOW TO MAKE IT

had been + verb + ing

WHEN TO USE IT

1. Duration Before Something in the Past



We use the Past Perfect Continuous to show that something started in the past and continued up until another time in the past. (NL: Je gebruikt het als je praat over iets dat duurde tot het moment in het verleden waar je het over hebt.) "For five minutes" and "for two weeks" are both durations which can be used with the Past Perfect Continuous.

Examples:

- They **had been talking** for over an hour before Tony arrived.
- She **had been working** at that company for three years when it went out of business.
- How long **had you been waiting** to get on the bus?
- Mike wanted to sit down because he **had been standing** all day at work.
- James **had been teaching** at the university for more than a year before he left for Asia.
- A: How long **had you been studying** Turkish before you moved to Ankara?
B: I **had not been studying** Turkish very long.

2. Cause of Something in the Past



Using the Past Perfect Continuous before another action in the past is a good way to show cause and effect.

Examples:

- Jason was tired because he **had been jogging**.
- Sam gained weight because he **had been overeating**.
- Betty failed the final test because she **had not been attending** class.

Past Continuous vs. Past Perfect Continuous

If you do not include a duration such as "for five minutes," "for two weeks" or "since Friday," many English speakers choose to use the Past Continuous rather than the Past Perfect Continuous. Be careful because this can change the meaning of the sentence. Past Continuous emphasizes interrupted actions, whereas Past Perfect Continuous emphasizes a duration of time before something in the past. Study the examples below to understand the difference.

Examples:

- He was tired because he **was exercising** so hard.

THIS SENTENCE EMPHASIZES THAT HE WAS TIRED BECAUSE HE WAS EXERCISING AT THAT EXACT MOMENT.

- He was tired because he **had been exercising** so hard.

THIS SENTENCE EMPHASIZES THAT HE WAS TIRED BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN EXERCISING OVER A PERIOD OF TIME.

*IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE WAS STILL EXERCISING AT THAT MOMENT **OR** THAT HE HAD JUST FINISHED.*