

14 The past perfect continuous

English uses the past perfect continuous with the past simple to talk about an activity that was in progress before another action or event happened.

See also:

Past simple **7** Present perfect continuous **12**
Infinitives and participles **51**

14.1 THE PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

The past simple refers to a specific completed event in the past. The past perfect continuous describes a repeated action or continuing activity that was taking place before that completed event.

PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

He **had been studying** English for two years before he **went** to London.

PAST SIMPLE



TWO YEARS BEFORE

PAST

NOW

By the time Katie **arrived** home, she **had been driving** for six hours.



SIX HOURS BEFORE

PAST

NOW

HOW TO FORM

The past perfect continuous is formed using "had been" plus a present participle.

SUBJECT

"HAD BEEN"

VERB + "-ING"

REST OF SENTENCE

He

had been

studying

English for two years.

"Had been" doesn't change with the subject.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



She **decided** to buy a new car because her old one **hadn't been working** for weeks.



I **went** to see the doctor after I'd **been feeling** unwell for a few days.



The band **had been rehearsing** every day, so they **won** the competition.



I **had been training** to be a dancer until I **broke** my leg.

14.2 THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS AND PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

The present perfect continuous is used to talk about an action in progress or repeated activity that was taking place until the present moment.



TWO HOURS AGO



NOW

I'm really thirsty.
I **have been cycling**
for two hours.

PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

The past perfect continuous is used to talk about an ongoing action or repeated activity that was taking place until another specified moment in the past.



TWO HOURS BEFORE



PAST



NOW

I **was** really thirsty.
I **had been cycling**
for two hours.