

## Unit 23

## Past perfect continuous (I had been doing)

**a** Study this example situation:



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 wasn't raining when I looked out of the window; the sun was shining. But it **had been raining**. That's why the ground was wet.

**Had been raining** is the *past perfect continuous* tense:  
I/he/she (etc.) **had** (= I'd / he'd / she'd etc.) **been doing**.

- When the boys came into the house, their clothes were dirty, their hair was untidy and one had a black eye. They **had been fighting**.
- I was very tired when I arrived home. I'd **been working** hard all day.

**b** You can use the past perfect continuous to say how long something had been happening before something else happened:

- The football match had to be stopped. They **had been playing** for half an hour when there was a terrible storm.
- Ken **had been smoking** for 30 years when he finally gave it up.

**c** The past perfect continuous (**I had been doing**) is the past of the present perfect continuous (**I have been doing**). Compare:

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>
How long <b>have you been waiting</b> ? (until now) He's out of breath. He <b>has been running</b> .	How long <b>had you been waiting</b> when the bus finally came? He was out of breath. He <b>had been running</b> .
(until now) He's out of breath. He <b>has been running</b> .	the bus finally came? He was out of breath. He <b>had been running</b> .

**d** Compare the past perfect continuous (**I had been doing**) and the past continuous (**I was doing**):

- When I looked out of the window, it **had been raining**. (= It wasn't raining when I looked out; it had stopped.)
- When I looked out of the window, it **was raining**. (= Rain was falling at the time I looked out.)

**e** Some verbs (for example **know**) cannot be used in the continuous form. See **Unit 3b** for a list of these verbs.

For the past perfect simple see **Unit 22**.

- The football match had to be stopped. They **had been playing** for half an hour when there was a terrible storm.