

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:

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

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.