



Tikrit University

College of Education for Women

English Department

Subject : Grammar

{First and Third Year}

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**Past Perfect Continuous Tense**

The Past Perfect Continuous is another tense that expresses the "past in the past".

In this lesson we look at the **structure** and **use** of the Past Perfect Continuous tense, followed by a **quiz** to check your understanding.

Note that **continuous** tenses are also called **progressive** tenses. So the Past Perfect Continuous tense is sometimes called the Past Perfect Progressive tense.

### How do we make the Past Perfect Continuous tense?

The structure of the Past Perfect Continuous tense is:

subject	+	auxiliary <i>have</i>	+	auxiliary <i>be</i>	+	main verb
		conjugated in Past Simple		past participle		
		<b>had</b>		<b>been</b>		<b>present participle</b>

The first auxiliary verb (have) is conjugated in the Past Simple, invariable: *had*

The second auxiliary verb (be) is invariable in past participle form: *been*

The main verb is invariable in present participle form: *-ing*

For negative sentences we insert **not** after the first auxiliary verb.

For question sentences, we **exchange** the subject and the first auxiliary verb.

Look at these example sentences with the Past Perfect Continuous tense:

	subject	auxiliary verb		auxiliary verb	main verb	
+	I	had		been	working.	

+	You	had		been	playing	tennis.
-	It	had	not	been	working	well.
-	We	had	not	been	expecting	her.
?	Had	you		been	drinking?	
?	Had	they		been	waiting	long?

### Contraction with Past Perfect Continuous

When we use the Past Perfect Continuous in speaking, we often contract the subject and the first auxiliary verb. We also sometimes do this in informal writing.

I had been	I'd been
you had been	you'd been
he had been she had been it had been	he'd been she'd been it'd been
we had been	we'd been

they had been	they'd been
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- He'd been drinking all day.
- It'd been pouring with rain.

In negative sentences, we may contract the first auxiliary verb and "not":

- We hadn't been living there long.
- They hadn't been studying very hard.

### How do we use the Past Perfect Continuous tense?

The Past Perfect Continuous tense is like the Past Perfect tense, but it expresses longer actions in the **past** before another action in the **past**. For example:

- Ram started waiting at 9am. I arrived at 11am. When I arrived, Ram **had been waiting** for two hours.

past	present	future
Ram starts waiting in past at 9am.		
9	11	
I arrive in past at 11am.		
Ram <b>had been waiting</b> for two hours when I arrived.		

Here are some more examples:

- John was very tired. He **had been running**.

- I could smell cigarettes. Somebody **had been smoking**.
- Suddenly, my car broke down. I was not surprised. It **had not been running** well for a long time.
- **Had** the pilot **been drinking** before the crash?

You can sometimes think of the Past Perfect Continuous tense like the Present Perfect Continuous tense, but instead of the time being **now** the time is **before**.

	have been doing →		
had been doing →			
	<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>

For example, imagine that you meet Ram at 11am. Ram says to you:

- "I **am** angry. I **have been waiting** for two hours."

Later, you tell your friends:

- "Ram **was** angry. He **had been waiting** for two hours."