**The past continuous tense:**

We use the past continuous to talk about the past:

for something which happened before and after another action:

The children were doing their homework when I got home.

Compare: The children did their homework when (= after) I got home.

This use of the past continuous is very common at the beginning of a story:

The other day I was waiting for a bus when …

Last week, as I was driving to work, …

for something that happened before and after a specific time:

It was eight o'clock. I was writing a letter.

Compare: At eight o'clock I wrote (= started writing) some letters.

to show that something continued for some time:

My head was aching.

Everyone was shouting.

for something that happened again and again:

I was practising every day, three times a day.

They were meeting secretly after school.

They were always quarrelling.

with verbs which show change or growth:

The children were growing up quickly.

Her English was improving.

My hair was going grey.

The town was changing quickly.

We do not normally use the past continuous with stative verbs. We use the past simple instead:

When I got home, I really needed (NOT was needing) a shower.

**Past Perfect Continuous:**

The past perfect continuous (also called past perfect progressive) is a verb tense which is used to show that an action started in the past and continued up to another point in the past. Read on for detailed descriptions, examples, and present perfect continuous exercises.

Past Perfect Continuous Forms

The past perfect continuous is formed using had + been + present participle. Questions are indicated by inverting the subject and had. Negatives are made with not

Statement: You had been waiting there for more than two hours when she finally arrived.

Question: Had you been waiting there for more than two hours when she finally arrived?

Negative: You had not been waiting there for more than two hours when she finally arrived.

**Past Perfect Continuous Uses:**

**USE 1** Duration Before Something in the Past

past perfect continuous duration

We use the past perfect continuous to show that something started in the past and continued up until another time in the past. "For five minutes" and "for two weeks" are both durations which can be used with the past perfect continuous. Notice that this is related to the present perfect continuous; however, the duration does not continue until now, it stops before something else in the past.

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.

**USE 2** Cause of Something in the Past

past perfect continuous cause

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.