**Past Perfect**

### FORM [had + past participle] You **had studied** English before you moved to New York.

### USE 1 Completed Action Before Something in the Past



The Past Perfect expresses the idea that something occurred before another action in the past. It can also show that something happened before a specific time in the past.

* I **had** never **seen** such a beautiful beach before I went to Kauai.
* I did not have any money because I **had lost** my wallet.
* Tony knew Istanbul so well because he **had visited** the city several times.
* **Had** Susan ever **studied** Thai before she moved to Thailand?

### USE 2 Duration Before Something in the Past (Stative Verbs)



With Stative Verbs, we use the Past Perfect to show that something started in the past and continued up until another action in the past.

Examples:

* We **had had** that car for ten years before it broke down.
* By the time Alex finished his studies, he **had been** in London for over eight years.
* They felt bad about selling the house because they **had owned** it for more than forty years.

Although the above use of Past Perfect is normally limited to Stative Verbs, the verbs "live," "work," "teach," and "study" are sometimes used in this way even though they are NOT stative verbs.

### IMPORTANT Specific Times with the Past Perfect

* Unlike with the [Present Perfect](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/presentperfect.html), it is possible to use specific time words or phrases with the Past Perfect. Although this is possible, it is usually not necessary.

Example:She **had visited** her Japanese relatives once in 1993 before she moved in with them in 1996.

* If the Past Perfect action did occur at a specific time, the Simple Past can be used instead of the Past Perfect when "**before" or "after"** is used in the sentence. The words "before" and "after" actually tell you what happens first, so the Past Perfect is optional. For this reason, both sentences below are correct.

She **had visited/visited** her Japanese relatives once in 1993 before she moved in with them in 1996.

#### HOWEVER: If the Past Perfect is not referring to an action at a specific time, Past Perfect is not optional. Compare the examples below. Here Past Perfect is referring to a lack of experience rather than an action at a specific time. For this reason, Simple Past cannot be used.

Examples:

* She never **saw** a bear before she moved to Alaska. **Not Correct**
* She **had** never **seen** a bear before she moved to Alaska. **Correct**

# Past Perfect Continuous

### FORM [had been + present participle]

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

### USE 1 Duration Before Something in the Past



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.

* 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?

### USE 2 Cause of Something in the Past



Using the Past Perfect Continuous before another action in the past is a good way to show cause and effect.

* 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.

### Past Continuous vs. Past Perfect Continuous

If you do not include a duration such as "for five minutes," "for two weeks" or "since Friday," many English speakers choose to use the Past Continuous rather than the Past Perfect Continuous. Be careful because this can change the meaning of the sentence. Past Continuous emphasizes interrupted actions, whereas Past Perfect Continuous emphasizes a duration of time before something in the past. Study the examples below to understand the difference.

* He was tired because he **was exercising** hard.
This sentence emphasizes that he was tired because he was exercising at that exact moment.
* He was tired because he **had been exercising** hard.
This sentence emphasizes that he was tired because he had been exercising over a period of time. It is possible that he was still exercising at that moment OR that he had just finished.

### REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs / Mixed Verbs

It is important to remember that [Non-Continuous Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html) cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Instead of using Past Perfect Continuous with these verbs, you must use [Past Perfect](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/pastperfect.html).

Examples:

* The motorcycle **had been belonging** to George for years before Tina bought it. **Not Correct**
* The motorcycle **had belonged** to George for years before Tina bought it. **Correct**

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