

Activity Type

Grammar and Reading Exercises: gap-fill, error correction, writing sentences from prompts, reading comprehension questions

Focus

Past perfect continuous

Aim

To learn and practice the past perfect continuous tense.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

30 minutes

Introduction

Here is an engaging worksheet to help students learn and practice the past perfect continuous tense.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

Read through the grammar introduction with the class.

Students then do a gap-fill exercise where they complete past perfect continuous sentences using verbs in brackets.

Exercise A - Answer key

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. had been playing | 6. had been helping |
| 2. had been exercising | 7. had been wilting |
| 3. had been waiting | 8. had been working |
| 4. had been concentrating | 9. had been decorating |
| 5. had been studying | 10. hadn't been feeling |

Next, students correct mistakes in a set of past perfect continuous sentences.

Exercise B - Answer key

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. had been travelling | 5. had been living |
| 2. had been searching | 6. had been talking |
| 3. had he been waiting | 7. hadn't been standing |
| 4. hadn't been sitting | 8. Had she been cooking |

Students then fill in gaps in a story using verbs from a box in the past perfect continuous tense.

Exercise C - Answer key

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. had been sitting | 5. had been minding |
| 2. had been working | 6. had been wondering |
| 3. had been chewing | 7. had been disappearing |
| 4. had been dreaming | 8. had been stealing |

(continued on the next page)

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Procedure continued

Students then move on to answer comprehension questions about the story using full past perfect continuous sentences.

Exercise D - Answer key

1. Michael had been sitting in the garden for a few hours.
2. Michael was exhausted because he had been working long days at the office.
3. Michael hadn't noticed that Rufus had been chewing on a slipper.
4. The story says that Rufus had been minding his own business.
5. Michael didn't notice the commotion because he had been sleeping.
6. For the last few weeks, Michael had been wondering why the dog biscuits had been disappearing.
7. The dog biscuits had been disappearing because the cat had been stealing them.

As an extension, write up the following phrases on the board:

had been gardening
had been wagging his tail
had been acting unusually
had been itching
had been sneezing
had not been eating
had been purring

Then, ask the students to write a short story about Michael, Rufus and the cat using the past perfect continuous forms in any order, using other narrative tenses where appropriate.

When the students have finished, ask them to read their stories to the class and check that the students have produced accurate past perfect continuous sentences.

The past perfect continuous (progressive) tense is used to show that an action began in the past and continued up to another point in the past.

The past perfect continuous structure: *had (not) + been + verb-ing*

Example: He **had been waiting** for the train for 30 minutes by the time it arrived.

To form a question in the past perfect continuous, invert the subject and auxiliary verb.

Example: **Had he been waiting** for the train for 30 minutes by the time it arrived?

A. Complete the past perfect continuous sentences using the verbs in brackets.

1. Sarah (play) the guitar for 3 years before she first performed on stage.
2. They (exercise) outside when there was a sudden storm which made them run for cover.
3. We (wait) 45 minutes for the bus before it finally arrived.
4. I was exhausted because I (concentrate) since 7 a.m.
5. As he (study) hard for the whole term, Zach was sure to pass the exam.
6. We both got in trouble because I (help) her with her homework the whole time.
7. Because of the recent heat wave, the plants (wilt).
8. I (work) for 5 months when my boss promoted me to supervisor.
9. They (decorate) the new house for hours and it was time to have a break.
10. I (not feel) worried about the presentation until I saw the audience.

B. Each past perfect continuous sentence below contains an error. Correct the mistakes.

1. We has been travelling around Europe for 4 weeks and had already visited 5 countries.
2. The authorities had been searched for him for 3 years before they finally caught him.
3. How long had he be waiting for her before she showed up?
4. I had been not sitting down for very long before I was called into the office.
5. My family and I had living in England for 15 years before we moved to the United States.
6. The man left the room after he had was talking on the phone for over an hour.
7. I hope they had not being standing out on the street for long.
8. Had she been cooked in the kitchen all afternoon or had she taken a break?

C. Fill in the gaps in the short story with the verbs in the box in the past perfect continuous tense.

disappear	sit	work	chew	dream	mind	wonder	steal
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The sun was shining and the smell of freshly cut grass lingered in the air.

Michael (1) in the garden for a few hours, dozing in his chair. He was exhausted because he (2) long days at the office. His dog, Rufus, was laying in the shade of an old



tree. He (3) on a slipper for a while, but Michael hadn't noticed. Michael (4) about going on holiday to a tropical island. Suddenly, a dark shadow dashed over the fence and through the open kitchen door. Rufus (5) his own business with the slipper, but the furry shadow caught his attention. Barking, he bolted after the creature. He leaped over Michael's legs and began a ferocious pursuit. Michael awoke to the sound of the commotion and saw his dog chasing a rather fat cat away from his food bowl. For the last few weeks, Michael (6) why Rufus's new dog biscuits (7) faster than he could refill them. The cat (8) his food!

D. Answer the questions about the story using full sentences in the past perfect continuous.

- How long had Michael been sitting in the garden?
.....
- Why was Michael exhausted?
.....
- What had Rufus been doing that Michael hadn't noticed?
.....
- How do you know that Rufus wasn't disturbing anyone before the cat arrived?
.....
- Why didn't Michael notice the commotion until he heard it?
.....
- What had Michael been wondering for the last few weeks?
.....
- Why had the dog biscuits been disappearing?
.....