Past Perfect Continuous Worksheet: Had Been Doing

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NAME

DATE

Remember

Form	Example
had been + -ing	They had been waiting for an hour.
Duration up to a past moment	When I met her, she had been living in Paris for five years.
Cause of a past result	His eyes were red. He had been crying.
Past perfect simple for completed actions and numbers	She had written four emails before lunch.

Typical mistakes

× Learners often say	✓ Say instead
I was tired because I had worked for twelve hours. (focus on the activity)	I was tired because I had been working for twelve hours.
She had been knowing him for years.	She had known him for years.
We had been wait for ages when the bus came.	We had been waiting for ages when the bus came.

1. Complete

Complete with the past perfect continuous of the verb in brackets.

1. The ground was wet. It _____ (rain).
2. She _____ (study) English for six years before she moved to London.
3. How long _____ you _____ (wait) when the doctor called you?
4. They were out of breath because they _____ (run).
5. He _____ (not / sleep) well, so he looked terrible.
6. We _____ (drive) for hours when we finally found a hotel.
7. I _____ (look) for a job for months before I got this one.
8. Her hands were covered in paint. She _____ (decorate) the kitchen.

2. Choose

Past perfect simple or continuous? Circle the best option.

1. By noon, she (had been answering / had answered) fifty emails.
2. I was hot because I (had been sitting / had sat) in the sun.
3. He (had known / had been knowing) her since childhood.
4. We (had been walking / had walked) for three hours, so we stopped.
5. When I got home, someone (had broken / had been breaking) the window.
6. They (had been arguing / had argued) all morning; you could feel it.
7. She (had visited / had been visiting) Rome three times before.
8. The kids were dirty. They (had been playing / had played) in the mud.

3. Correct the mistakes

Each sentence has one mistake. Write it correctly.

1. I had been work there for ten years when I left.
2. She was tired because she has been running.
3. They had been owning the house since 1990.
4. How long you had been waiting?
5. He had been written three books by 2010.
6. We were wet because we have walked in the rain.

Writing

Write a paragraph (6–7 sentences) about a time you were exhausted, angry or very happy. Explain why with the past perfect continuous.

Speaking

- Think of a time you were very tired. What had you been doing?
- How long had you been learning English when you first had a real conversation in it?
- Tell me about a time you had been waiting for something for a long time.
- Before your current job or studies, what had you been doing?

Answer key

1. Complete: 1 had been raining · 2 had been studying · 3 had … been waiting · 4 had been running · 5 hadn't been sleeping · 6 had been driving · 7 had been looking · 8 had been decorating

2. Choose: 1 had answered · 2 had been sitting · 3 had known · 4 had been walking · 5 had broken · 6 had been arguing · 7 had visited · 8 had been playing

3. Correct the mistakes: 1 I had been working there for ten years when I left. · 2 She was tired because she had been running. · 3 They had owned the house since 1990. · 4 How long had you been waiting? · 5 He had written three books by 2010. · 6 We were wet because we had been walking in the rain.

Writing, model answer: Last December I arrived home completely exhausted. I had been working twelve-hour days for three weeks to finish a big project. I hadn't been eating properly and I'd been sleeping very little. When I opened the door, my flatmate had cooked dinner for me. She had been planning it all day. I was so happy that I nearly cried.