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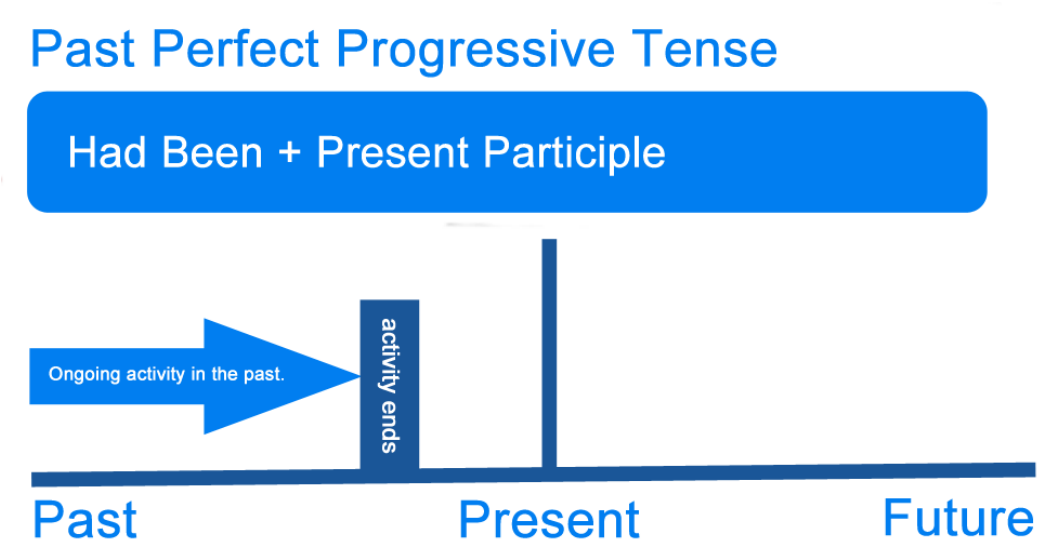
The **Past Perfect Continuous** is used to talk about an ongoing action that was taking place until another **specified moment in the past**.



via https://writingexplained.org/grammar-dictionary/past-perfect-progressive-tense

The **Past Perfect Continuous** is normally used with the Past Simple to talk about an activity that was **in progress before another action** or event happened. In such statements the Past Simple denotes a specific point in time – the completed event in the past.

- *The engine **had been running** for an hour before it stopped.* (Past action in progress: The engine had been running. Other action in the past: It was 3:00.)
- *It **had been snowing** for two hours before the roads were closed.* (Past action in progress: It had been snowing. Other action in the past: Roads were closed.)

When to use Past Perfect Continuous

The Past Perfect Continuous is used to express the following.

Duration of a past action

The Past Perfect Continuous describes a repeated or continuing action that was taking place before that completed event.

- *He **had been studying** (Past Perfect Continuous) French for two years before he went (Past Simple) to Paris.*
- *By the time Nick arrived (Past Simple) to the station, **he had been walking** for two hours.*

Cause of an action

We can also use the Past Perfect Continuous to explain the cause of something in the past.

- *My grades were great last semester because I **had been studying** every night.*
- *The plants died because we **had** actually **been watering** them too much.*

How to form Past Perfect Continuous

To make the Past Perfect Continuous, we use:

had been + the "-ing" form of the verb (Present Participle)

Singular	Plural
*I **had ('d) been fishing***	*We'**d been fishing***
*You'**d been fishing***	*You'**d been fishing***
*He/she/it'**d been fishing***	*They'**d been fishing***

- *Peter decided to buy a new car because his old one **hadn't been working** for years.*
- *I went to see the doctor after I'**d been feeling** unwell for a few days.*

Watch this video for understanding of Past Perfect Continuous tense:

More on this topic:

Past Perfect Continuous: Negative & Questions

Present Perfect Continuous or Past Perfect Continuous