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Verb tenses and aspects

63 Summary

A finite verb phrase is present tense or past tense. It can also have perfect aspect (*have*+ past participle) or continuous aspect (*be* + *ing*-form). The tenses and aspects can combine in the following ways.

Present continuous and present simple • 64

*We **are playing** cards now.*

*We **play** in the orchestra every week.*

Present perfect and past simple • 65

*We **have played** two games already.*

*We **played** tennis yesterday.*

Past continuous • 66

*We **were playing** cards at the time.*

Present perfect continuous • 67

*We **have been playing** cards all evening.*

Past perfect and past perfect continuous • 68

*We **had played** the game before then.*

*We **had been playing** for ages.*

OVERVIEW: uses of tenses and aspects • 69

Each of the eight forms above has a different meaning, depending on such things as the time and length of an action, and how the speaker sees it.

64 Present continuous and present simple

MACBETH

Andrew: *What **are** you **reading**?*

Sadie: *'Macbeth'. We're **doing** it in English. Our class **is going** to the theatre to see it next week. Mr Adams **is taking** us.*

Andrew: *What's it about?*

Sadie: *Well Macbeth **murders** the King of Scotland. But it **doesn't do** him any good.*

Andrew: *Mr Davis **takes** us for English. We **aren't doing** Shakespeare though.*

Sadie: *Mr Adams **loves** Shakespeare. He's always **quoting** bits at us. Shakespeare **is** England's greatest writer, he **says**.*

1 Form

Present continuous: present of *be* + active participle

Present simple: base form/s-form

I am reading

you/we/they are reading

he/she it is reading

I/you/we/they read

he/she/it reads

Negative

I am not reading

you/we/they are not reading

he/she/it is not reading

I/you/we they do not read

he/she/it does not read

Questions

am I reading?

are you/we/they reading?

is he/she it reading?

do I/you/we/they read?

does he/she/it read?

In present simple questions and negatives we use *do/does* and the base form of the verb.

NOT *He does not reads* and NOT *Does he reads?*

NOTE

a There are some spelling rules for the participle.

Leaving out *e*: *lose losing* • 292(1)

Doubling of some consonants: *stop stopping* • 293

b There are some spelling rules for the s-form.

Adding *es* after a sibilant sound: *push pushes* • 290(1)

Y changing to *ie*: *hurry hurries* • 294

c For pronunciation of the *s/es* ending, • 290(3).

2 Use

a An action continuing for a period

We use the present continuous for a present action over a period of time, something that we are in the middle of now. The action has started but it hasn't finished yet.

What are you reading? 'Macbeth'. ~ It's raining now, look.

Hurry up. Your friends are waiting for you. I'm just ironing this shirt.

Some typical time expressions with the present continuous are *now*, *at the moment*, *at present*, *just*, *already* and *still*.

We need not be doing the action at the moment of speaking.

I'm reading an interesting book. I can't remember what it's called.

We'd better get home. We're decorating the living-room at the moment.

b A state

We normally use the present simple for a present state: a feeling, opinion or relation.

Mr Adams loves Shakespeare. I think it's a good idea.

Who knows the answer? This book belongs to my sister.

Silicon is a chemical element. York lies on the River Ouse.

NOTE

We use the present simple for permanent states. With temporary states, states which go on only for a short time, we can sometimes use the present continuous. For details, • 62.

The weather looks/is looking better today.

c Repeated actions

We use the present simple for repeated actions such as routines and habits, things that happen again and again. We see the series of actions as permanent, without end.

*Bob works in Avonmouth. He usually **drives** to work.*

*We **do** lots of things in our spare time.*

*I **don't** often **see** Sarah.*

*The old man **takes** the dog for a walk every morning.*

Typical time expressions with the present simple are *always, often, usually, sometimes, ever/never; every day/week etc; once/twice a week etc; on Friday(s) etc; in the morning(s)/evening(s), at ten o'clock etc.*

We also use the present simple for permanent facts, things that always happen.

*Food **gives** you energy. Paint **dries** quicker in summer.*

But we use the present continuous when a series of actions is temporary, only for a period of time.

*My car's off the road. I'm **travelling** to work by bus this week.*

*We're **doing** 'Macbeth' in English.*

*Bob's **working** in Avonmouth at the moment. But they may be moving him to head office in Birmingham.*

NOTE

a We use the present simple to talk about a permanent routine, whether or not the action is happening at the moment.

*You're walking today. ~ Yes, I quite often **walk** to work.*

*You're walking today. You usually **drive**, don't you?*

b We use the present continuous to say that we are regularly in the middle of something.

*At seven we're usually **having** supper. (= At seven we're in the middle of supper.)*

Compare the present simple for a complete action.

*At seven we usually **have** supper. (= Seven is our usual time for supper.)*

We can talk about two actions.

*Whenever I see Graham, he's **swearing** at a track suit.*

*I like to listen to music when I'm **driving**.*

c We can also use the present simple to say what is the right way to do something.

*You **turn** left at the church. You **put** your money in here.*

d The present continuous with *always*

There is a special use of *always* with the continuous.

*They're **always giving** parties, those people next door.*

*I'm **always losing** things. I can never find anything.*

*Mr Adams is **always quoting** bits of Shakespeare.*

In this pattern *always* means 'very often' or 'too often'.

Compare these sentences.

*Our teacher **always gives** us a test. (= every lesson)*

*Our teacher is **always giving** us tests. (= very often)*

e An instant action

The present simple is also used to describe actions as they happen, for example in a commentary.

*Hacker **passes** the ball to Short. Short **moves** inside, but Burley **wins** it back for United.*

The speaker sees these actions as instant, happening in a moment. For actions over a period, we use the continuous.

*United **are playing** really well now. The crowd **are cheering** them on.*

We can also use the present (instead of the past) to tell a story. It makes the action seem more direct, as if happening now.

I'm standing outside the bank, and a man conies up to me and grabs hold of my arm.

We also use the present for actions in films, plays and books.

Macbeth murders the King of Scotland, who is staying at his castle.

NOTE

- a We can also use the present simple with a performative verb, e.g. *promise*. • 16(3)
I promise I won't forget. I suggest we go. Yes, I agree.
- b For the present simple after *here/there*, • 49(3b).
- c The present simple is used in headlines for a recent action: *Railfares go up*.
In normal style we use the present perfect: *Railfares have gone up*.

f Verbs of reporting

We can report the written word with a present simple verb. We see the written statement as existing in the present.

It says/ said in the paper that there's going to be a strike.

The notice warns passengers to take care.

The letter explains everything.

We can also do this with reports of spoken words that we have heard recently. • 268(1a)

Shakespeare is England's greatest writer, Mr Adams says I said.

g The future

We can use the present continuous to talk about what someone has arranged to do and the present simple for actions and events which are part of a timetable. • 73

Sadie is coming to stay with us next week.

The ferry gets into Rotterdam at six o'clock tomorrow morning.

We also use the present simple in some sub clauses of future time. • 77

If you need any help tomorrow, let me know.

65 Present perfect and past simple

THE SKI SHOP

Debbie: *Have you seen the ski shop that's just opened in the High Street?*

Nicola: *Yes, it opened last week, didn't it? I haven't been in there yet.*

Debbie: *I went in yesterday. It's really good. I bought some gloves. We're going to Italy next winter, and I can buy clothes there.*

Nicola: *I haven't skied for ages actually. I've got some skis - I've had them for years. I used to ski a lot when I was younger.*

Debbie: *Where did you go?*

Nicola: *We went to Austria a few times.*

Debbie: *I've been to Scotland twice, but I've never done any skiing abroad. I'm really looking forward to Italy.*

1 Form

Present perfect: present of <i>have</i> + past participle	Past simple: past form
<i>I/you/we/they have opened</i> <i>he/she/it has opened</i>	<i>someone opened</i>
Negative	
<i>I/you/we/they have not opened</i> <i>he/she/it has not opened</i>	<i>someone did not open</i>
Questions	
<i>have I/you/we/they opened?</i> <i>has he/she/it opened?</i>	<i>did someone open?</i>

Some participles and past forms are irregular, e.g. *seen, bought*. • 300

The perfect auxiliary is always *have*.

NOT *They arc opened the shop* and NOT *I am hurt myself*.

In past simple questions and negatives we use *did* and the base form of the verb.

NOT *It did not opened* and NOT *Did it opened?*

NOTE

a There are some spelling rules for the ed-form.

Adding *d* after *e*: *dose closed* • 291 (1)

Doubling of some consonants: *stop stopped* • 293

Y changing to *i*: *hurry hurried* • 294

b For pronunciation of the *ed* ending, • 291 (2).

2 Use of the present perfect

The present perfect tells us about the past and about the present. We use it for an action in the period leading up to the present.

The shop has just opened. The visitors have arrived.

The post hasn't come yet. Have you ever ridden a horse?

The visitors have arrived means that the visitors are here *now*.

We can also use the present perfect for repeated actions.

Debbie has been to Scotland twice. I've ridden lots of times.

We've often talked about emigrating.

We can also use the present perfect for states.

I've had these skis for years. The shop has been open a week.

I've always known about you and Diana.

Some typical time expressions with the present perfect are *just, recently, lately, already, before, so far, still, ever/never, today, this morning/evening, for weeks/years, since 1988*. Some of these are also used with the past simple. • (5)

NOTE For *been to* and *gone to*, • 84(6).

3 Use of the past simple

- a We use the past simple for an action in the past.

*The shop **opened** last week. I **bought** some gloves yesterday.*

*The earthquake **happened** in 1905. I **slept** badly.*

*When **did** the first Winter Olympics **take** place?*

The time of the action (*last week*) is over.

The past is the normal tense in stories.

*Once upon a time a Princess **went** into a wood and **sat** down by a stream.*

Some typical time expressions with the past simple are *yesterday, this morning/evening, last week/year, a week/month ago, that day/afternoon, the other day/week, at eleven o'clock, on Tuesday, in 1990, just, recently, once, earlier, then, next, after that*. Some of these are also used with the present perfect. • (5)

NOTE

- a With the past simple we often say *when* the action happened.

/bought some gloves yesterday.

I went in the shop yesterday. It's really good. I bought some gloves.

It is clear from the context that the action *bought* happened yesterday.

Sometimes there is no phrase of time, but we understand a definite time in the past.

I didn't eat any breakfast. My sister took this photo.

- b A phrase with *ago* means a finished time. It does not include the present, even though we measure it from the present. Compare these sentences.

I saw that film on Wednesday/two days ago.

I've seen that film.

- b We can also use the past simple for repeated actions.

*We **went** to Austria a few times. The children always **played** in the garden.*

We can also use the past simple for states.

*I **was** younger then. The Romans **had** a huge Empire.*

*We **stayed** on the Riviera for several weeks.*

NOTE

- a There are other ways of expressing repeated actions in the past. • 100

*We **used to** go to Austria. The children **would** always play in the garden.*

- b For the past tense in a tentative request, e.g. *I **wanted** to ask you something*, • 61(1) Note.

For the past tense expressing something unreal, e.g. *I wish I **had** more money*, • 241(3).

For the past tense expressing a possible future action, e.g. *If I **told** you, you'd laugh*, • 257(4c).

4 Present perfect or past simple?

- a The choice depends on whether the speaker sees the action as related to the present or as in the past.

*The shop **has just opened**.*

*The shop **opened** last week.*

The two sentences can refer to the same action. The present perfect tells us something about the present: the shop is open now. But the past simple means a finished time (*last week*). It does not tell us about the present.

Present: *The shop **has just opened**. (So it's open now.)*

Past: *The shop **opened** last week. It's doing very well.*

*The shop **opened** last week. Then it closed again two days later.*

Present: *The car **has broken** down. (So I have no transport now.)*

Past: *The car **broke** down. It's still off the road.*

*The car **broke** down. But luckily we got it going again.*

- b When we use the present perfect for a state, it means that the state still exists now. If the state is over, we use the past.
I've had these skis for years.
I had those skis for years. (Then I sold them.)
I've been here since three o'clock.
I was there from three o'clock to about five. (Then I left.)
 Compare the past simple for an action.
I bought these skis years ago. I arrived here at three o'clock.
- c When we use the present perfect for repeated actions, it means that the action may happen again. The past simple means that the series of actions is over.
Gayle has acted in more than fifty films. (Her career has continued up to now.)
Gayle acted in more than fifty films. (She is dead, or her career is over.)
- d Look at this news report.
There has been a serious accident on the M6. It happened at ten o'clock this morning near Preston when a lorry went out of control and collided with a car...
 The present perfect is used to give the fact of the accident and the past simple for details such as when and how it happened. We often use the present perfect to first mention a topic and the past simple for the details.
I've just been on a skiing holiday. ~ Oh, where did you go?
Have you sent in your application? ~ Yes, I sent it in ages ago.

5 Adverbials of time with the present perfect and past simple

Some adverbials used with both forms are *just, recently, already, once/twice* etc, *ever/never, today, this morning/week* etc and phrases with *for* and *since*. For American usage, • 303(6).

- a With *just* and *recently* there is little difference in meaning.
I've just heard the news. I just heard the news.
We've recently moved house. We recently moved house.
 Compare these examples with *already*.
I've already heard the news. (before now)
I already knew before you told me. (before then)
- b *Once, twice* etc with the present perfect means the number of times the action has happened up to now.
We've been to Scotland once/lots of times.
This is the third time my car has broken down this month.
 With the simple past *once* usually means 'at a time in the past'.
We went to Scotland once.
Ever/never with the present perfect means 'in all the time up to now'. With the simple past it refers to a finished period.
Have you ever visited our showroom?
Did you ever visit our old showroom?
- c We can use *this morning, this afternoon* and *today* with the present perfect when they include the present time. When the time is over, we use the past.
It has been windy this morning. (The morning is not yet over.)
It was windy this morning. (It is afternoon or evening.)

With *today* there is little difference in meaning.

It has been windy today. (The day is not yet over.)

It was windy today. (The day is over.)

Both sentences are spoken late in the day. The second must be in the evening. The speaker sees the day as over.

We use the present perfect with *this week/month/year* when we mean the whole period up to now.

I've seen a lot of television this week.

We use the simple past for one time during the period.

I saw an interesting programme this week.

We might say this on Friday about something two or three days earlier.

We often use the negative with phrases of unfinished time.

It hasn't been very warm today.

I haven't seen much television this week.

- d We often use *for* and *since* with the negative present perfect.

I haven't skied for years. I haven't skied since 1988.

We can also use *since* with a clause.

I haven't skied since I was twelve.

Compare the past simple.

I last skied years ago/in 1988/when I was twelve.

We can also use a phrase with *for* with the past simple to say how long something went on.

I skied for hours.

NOTE

- a We can use a pattern with *it* to emphasize the time.

It's years since I skied/I've skied. It was in 1988 (that) I last skied.

- b *I've been here (for) a month* means that I arrived here a month ago. *I am here for a month* means that I have arranged to stay here for a month in total.

66 Past continuous

AN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT

'I was going home from the pub at quarter to eleven. There was a full moon. I was walking over the bridge when I saw the UFO. It was quite low. It was long and thin, shaped like a cigar. It appeared to be made of aluminium. It was travelling east to west, towards Warminster. I didn't know what to do. I didn't have a camera of course. I watched it for a minute and then it went behind a cloud.'

1 Form

Past of *be* + active participle

I/he/she/it was flying

you/we/they were flying

Negative

I/he/she/it was not flying

you/we/they were not flying

Questions

was I/he/she/it flying?

were you/we/they flying?

2 Use

a An action over a past period

We use the past continuous for an action over a period of past time, something that we were in the middle of.

*At quarter to eleven I **was walking** home.*

*The UFO **was travelling** east to west.*

*I **wasn't sleeping**, so I got up.*

*I looked into the room. All the old people **were watching** television.*

Compare the present continuous and past continuous.

The UFO is travelling west. (It is in the middle of its journey.)

*The UFO **was travelling** west. (It **was** in the middle of its journey.)*

But for a complete action in the past, we use the past simple.

*The UFO **went** behind a cloud.*

In these examples the past continuous means an action over a whole period.

*The salesman **was travelling** from Monday to Friday.*

*We **were watching** for UFOs all night. We never went to sleep.*

Here we could also use the past simple.

Period of time: *He **was travelling** all week. He was very tired.*

Complete action: *He **travelled** all week. He drove a long way.*

b Past continuous and past simple

The period of a past continuous action can include a clock time.

*I was walking home **at quarter to eleven**.*

It can also include another action.

*I was walking home **when I saw the UFO**.*

Here the speaker sees one action as happening around another. The past continuous is the longer, background action (*walking*), and the past simple is the shorter, complete action (*saw*). The shorter action interrupted the longer one. Here are some more examples.

*Tim **was washing** his hair when the doorbell **rang**.*

*I **had** a sudden idea when/while/as I **was waiting** in a traffic queue.*

*The sun **was shining** when the campers **woke**.*

When two actions both went on during the same period of time, we use the past continuous for both.

*Tim **was washing** his hair while I **was cleaning** up the kitchen.*

When one complete action followed another, we use the past simple for both.

*Tim **got up** when the doorbell **rang**. (= The doorbell rang and then Tim got up.)*

c Past states

For a past state we normally use the past simple.

*My grandmother **loved** this house.*

*I **didn't know** what to do.*

*The UFO **appeared** to be made of aluminium. It **had** a shape like a cigar.*

NOTE

With temporary states we can sometimes use the past continuous. For details, • 62.

*I **didn't feel/wasn't feeling** very well.*

Other uses of the past continuous

- a We can use the past continuous for repeated actions which are temporary, only for a period.
My car was off the road. I was travelling to work by bus that week.
 Compare *I'm travelling to work by bus this week.* • 64(2c)
- b We can use the past continuous for a past arrangement.
I was on my way to the pub. I was meeting James there.
 (= I had arranged to meet James there.)
 For *I'm meeting James at the pub tonight.* • 73(1).
- c With the continuous, *always* means 'very often' or 'too often'.
Do you remember Mr Adams? He was always quoting Shakespeare.
 For examples with the present continuous, • 64(2d).

67 Present perfect continuous

GOING INTO HOSPITAL

Mrs Webster: *I shall have to go into hospital some time to have an operation on my leg.*

Ted: *Are you on the waiting list?*

Mrs Webster: *Yes, I've been waiting for three years.*

Ted: *Three years! That's awful! You've been suffering all that time.*

Mrs Webster: *Well, I have to use the wheelchair, that's all.*

Ted: *They've been cutting expenditure, trying to save money. It's not right.*

Mrs Webster: *My son David has written to them three times. He's been trying to get me in quicker. I don't know if it'll do any good.*

1 Form

Present of *have + been + active participle*

I/you/we/they have been waiting

he/she/it has been waiting

Negative

I/you/we/they have not been waiting

he/she/it has not been waiting

Questions

have I/you/we/they been waiting?

has he/she/it been waiting?

2 Use

- a We use the present perfect continuous for an action over a period of time up to now, the period leading up to the present.

I've been waiting for three years.

The government has been cutting expenditure.

How long have you been using a wheelchair?

The roof has been leaking. The carpet's wet.

The speaker looks back from the present and so uses the perfect.

NOT *I wait for three years.*

We often use *for* and *since*. • 227(5)

We've been living here for six months/since April.

NOTE

The action can end just before the present.

You look hot. ~ Yes, I've been running.

- b We can use the present perfect continuous for repeated actions up to now.
*David **has been writing** letters to the hospital.*
*I've **been going** to evening classes in Arabic.*
 The speaker sees the actions as a continuing series.
 Compare the present perfect for a complete series of actions.
*David **has written** to the hospital three times now.*
- c Compare the present perfect continuous and the present perfect for a single action.
 Period of time: *I've **been washing** the car. I'm rather wet.*
 Complete action: *I've **washed** the car. It looks a lot cleaner now.*
 The continuous here focuses on the action going on. The present perfect focuses on the result of the action. The choice depends on how the speaker sees the action.
 When we say how long, we normally use the continuous form. When we say how many, we do not use the continuous.
*Tina **has been writing** her report since two o'clock. She's **written** twelve pages.*
 Now look at these examples.
*I've **been waiting** here for ages./I've **waited** here for ages.*
*We've **been living** here since April/We've **lived** here since April.*
 The continuous is more usual here, but there is little difference in meaning.
- d We use the present perfect (not the continuous) for a state up to the present.
*She **has been** in a wheelchair for three years. I've always **hated** hospitals.*

68 Past perfect and past perfect continuous

*Miranda lay on her bed and stared at the ceiling. She was depressed. Her boyfriend Max **had gone** on holiday with his brother the day before. He **hadn't invited** Miranda to go with him. He **hadn't** even **said** goodbye properly. And everything **had been going** so well. What **had** she **done** wrong?*

1 Form

Past perfect: <i>had + past participle</i>	Past perfect continuous: <i>had been + active participle</i>
<i>someone had invited</i>	<i>someone had been going</i>
Negative <i>someone had not invited</i>	<i>someone had not been going</i>
Questions <i>had someone invited?</i>	<i>had someone been going?</i>

2 Use of the past perfect

We use the past perfect for an action before a past time.

*She **had met** Max six months before. I knew I **had forgotten** something.*

*By midnight they **had come** to an agreement.*

*We ran onto the platform, but the train **had just gone**.*

The paragraph above begins in the past tense. The situation is that Miranda lay on her bed. The writer looks back from the past situation to a time before.

Compare the present perfect and past perfect.

*The floor **is** clean. **I have** washed it.*

*The floor **was** clean. **I had** washed it.*

We can also use the past perfect for a state.

*They **had been** friends for six months.*

*Everything **had seemed** fine up to then.*

*The gunman **had** previously **been** in prison for three years.*

NOTE For the past perfect in if-clauses, • 257(6).

3 Past simple and past perfect

- a To talk about one action in the past we use the past simple.

*This lamp **is** a new one. **I bought** it last week. NOT *I had bought it last week.**

We also use the past simple when one action comes straight after another, when someone reacts quickly.

*When the shot **rang** out, everyone **threw** themselves to the floor.*

To say that someone finished one action and then did something else, we use either *when... had done* or *after... did/had done*.

***When** Miranda **had written** the letter, she went out to post it.*

***After** Miranda **wrote/had written** the letter, she went out to post it.*

NOT *When Miranda wrote the letter, she went out to post it.*

NOTE

For the past perfect with *hardly* and *no sooner*, • 250(5).

***I had hardly** sat down when the phone rang.*

- b Sometimes the choice of past simple or past perfect can make a difference to the meaning.

*When the boss arrived, the meeting **began**.*

(The boss arrived and then the meeting began.)

*When the boss arrived, the meeting **had begun**.*

(The meeting began before the boss arrived.)

*When Max **spoke**, Miranda put the phone down.*

(= When Max started speaking...)

*When Max **had spoken**, Miranda put the phone down.*

(= When Max finished speaking...)

- c We can sometimes use the past perfect after *before* or *until*.

*The toaster went wrong **before** it toasted/**had toasted** one piece of bread.*

*We didn't want to stop **until** we finished/**had finished** the job.*

4 Use of the past perfect continuous

We use the past perfect continuous for an action over a period up to a past time.

*Everything **had been going** so well up to then.*

*The driver who died in the accident **had been drinking**.*

*A woman collapsed at the supermarket checkout. She **had been smuggling** out a frozen chicken under her hat.*

Compare the present and past tense.

*My hands **are** wet. **I have been washing** the floor.*

*My hands **were** wet. **I had been washing** the floor.*

5 The past perfect continuous and other past forms

- a Compare the past perfect continuous and past perfect.

Period of time: ***I'd been mowing*** the lawn. *I was tired.*

Complete action: ***I'd mown*** the lawn. *It looked nice.*

The past perfect continuous (*had been mowing*) focuses on the action going on.

The past perfect (*had mown*) focuses on the result of the action.

When we say how long, we normally use the continuous form. When we say how many, we do not use the continuous.

*The volunteers brought in their collecting boxes at lunch time yesterday. They **had been collecting** money **all morning**. They **had collected** hundreds of pounds.*

- b Compare the past continuous and past perfect continuous.

*When I saw Debbie, she **was playing** golf.* (I saw her in the middle of the game.)

*When I saw Debbie, she'd **been playing** golf.* (I saw her after the game.)

69 Overview: uses of tenses and aspects

1 Present continuous • 64

In the middle of an action

I'm watching this comedy.

A temporary routine

I'm working late this week.

Present simple • 64

A present state

I like comedies.

A permanent routine

I work late most days.

2 Present perfect • 65

An action in the period up to the present

I've written the letter.

A series of actions up to the present

I've played basketball a few times.

A state up to the present

I've been here for a week.

Past simple • 65

An action in the past

I wrote the letter yesterday.

A series of past actions

I played basketball years ago.

A past state

/ was there for a week.

3 Past continuous • 66

An action over a period of past time

It was raining at the time.

4 Present perfect continuous • 67

An action over a period up to the present

It has been raining all day.

5 Past perfect continuous • 68

An action over a period up to a past time

It had been raining for hours.

Past perfect • 68

An action before a past time

The rain had stopped by then.

A state before a past time

The weather had been awful.