

Difference between past continuous and past perfect continuous tenses

Form

Affirmative	Interrogative	Negative
I was reading.	Was I reading?	I was not reading.
She was writing.	Was she writing?	She was not writing.
They were writing.	Were they writing?	They were not writing.
You were sleeping.	Were you sleeping?	You were not sleeping.
He was swimming.	Was he swimming?	He was not swimming?
It was raining.	Was it raining?	It was not raining.

Notes

You will have noticed that the past continuous tense is formed by putting was / were with -ing form of the verb.

Use was when the subject is a singular noun. Was is also used with the pronouns *I, it, he* and *she*.

Use were when the subject is a plural noun. Were is also used with the pronouns *you, they* and *we*.

The past perfect continuous tense

Form

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Affirmative	Interrogative	Negative
I had been waiting.	Had I been waiting?	I had not been waiting.
She had been working.	Had she been working?	She had not been working.
It had been raining.	Had it been raining?	It had not been raining.
We had been working.	Had we been working?	We had not been working.
She had been playing.	Had she been playing?	She had not been playing.

Uses

The past perfect continuous tense is used to talk about longer actions or situations which had continued up to the past moment that we are thinking about.

At that time I had been studying in London for three years.

When I found Susie, I could see that she had been crying.

Difference between past perfect continuous and past continuous tenses

Both past continuous and past perfect continuous tenses can be used to talk about actions or situations that were in progress at a certain point of time in the past. While the past continuous merely shows continuity, the past perfect continuous tense also puts an emphasis on the idea of duration. It is mainly used to indicate the duration of a past activity or state.