



Past Perfect Continuous: Past Perfect vs Past Perfect Continuous

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

1. When we arrived, the film ____ (start).
a) had started
b) had been starting
c) started
d) was starting
2. She ____ (work) at the company for twenty years when she retired.
a) worked
b) was working
c) has worked
d) had been working
3. I felt sick because I ____ (eat) an entire box of chocolates.
a) had been eating
b) ate
c) was eating
d) had eaten
4. Her eyes were red and her cheeks were still wet because she ____ (cry).
a) cried
b) had been crying
c) was crying
d) had cried
5. By the time I got home, my sister ____ (cook) dinner.
a) was cooking
b) had been cooking
c) had cooked
d) cooked
6. By the time I got home, my sister ____ (cook) for hours and the meal wasn't ready yet.
a) was cooking
b) cooked
c) had been cooking
d) had cooked
7. He ____ (already/read) the book, so he knew the ending.
a) already read
b) had already read
c) was already reading
d) has already read
8. He ____ (read) for three hours, so his eyes were tired.
a) read
b) had been reading
c) has read
d) was reading
9. I ____ (know) her for years before we started dating, so it felt natural.
a) had been knowing
b) had known
c) have known
d) was knowing
10. They ____ (travel) all day, so they were exhausted.
a) has travelled
b) had been travelling
c) were travelling
d) travelled
11. She ____ (already/write) three novels before she became famous.
a) already wrote
b) had already written
c) has already written
d) was already writing

12. She ____ (write) her novel for two years when she finally finished it.
a) was writing
b) wrote
c) had been writing
d) had written
13. I ____ (want) to visit Japan for a long time before I finally went.
a) have wanted
b) was wanting
c) had wanted
d) had been wanting
14. The ground was wet and puddles were still forming. It ____ (rain).
a) rained
b) had rained
c) was raining
d) had been raining
15. I ____ (already/finish) my homework before dinner.
a) already finished
b) had already finished
c) have already finished
d) was already finishing
16. She was out of breath. She ____ (run).
a) had been running
b) was running
c) had run
d) ran
17. He ____ (own) the car for five years before he sold it.
a) was owning
b) had owned
c) had been owning
d) has owned
18. My legs ached because I ____ (stand) for hours.
a) has stood
b) had been standing
c) stood
d) was standing
19. They ____ (already / leave) when we arrived.
a) had already been leaving
b) were already leaving
c) had already left
d) already left
20. He ____ (play) tennis all afternoon, which is why he was so sweaty.
a) had been playing
b) played
c) has played
d) was playing



Answers

1. a) had started
2. d) had been working
3. d) had eaten
4. b) had been crying
5. c) had cooked
6. c) had been cooking
7. b) had already read
8. b) had been reading
9. b) had known
10. b) had been travelling
11. b) had already written
12. c) had been writing
13. c) had wanted
14. d) had been raining
15. b) had already finished
16. a) had been running
17. b) had owned
18. b) had been standing
19. c) had already left
20. a) had been playing



Explanations

1. “had started” (a)

Use Past Perfect 'had started' for a completed action. The film began before we arrived (single completed event).

2. “had been working” (d)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been working' to emphasize the duration of the action (twenty years) before a past event ('she retired'). 'Has worked' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.

3. “had eaten” (d)

Use Past Perfect 'had eaten' because the quantified object ('an entire box') emphasizes the completed result, not the duration of eating.

4. “had been crying” (b)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been crying' because the visible, ongoing evidence ('eyes were red', 'cheeks were still wet') points to a recent continuous action, not just a completed one.

5. “had cooked” (c)

Use Past Perfect 'had cooked' if the dinner was finished and ready when you arrived.

6. “had been cooking” (c)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been cooking' because the action was still in progress (meal wasn't ready).

7. “had already read” (b)

Use Past Perfect 'had already read' for a completed action before another past moment. 'Already' emphasizes that the reading was finished before he needed to know the ending.

8. “had been reading” (b)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been reading' to emphasize the duration ('for three hours') that caused a past result ('eyes were tired'). 'Has read' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.

9. “had known” (b)

Use Past Perfect 'had known' because 'know' is a stative verb and cannot be used in continuous form. 'Have known' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.

10. “had been travelling” (b)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been travelling' to emphasize the tiring, continuous activity ('all day') that caused a past result ('were exhausted'). 'Has travelled' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.

11. “had already written” (b)

Use Past Perfect 'had already written' because we're counting completed novels (three) before a past event ('became famous'). 'Already' emphasizes that the writing was finished before the fame.

12. “had been writing” (c)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been writing' to emphasize the duration of writing (two years).

13. “had wanted” (c)

Use Past Perfect 'had wanted' because 'want' is a stative verb and is not normally used in continuous form. 'Have wanted' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.

14. “had been raining” (d)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been raining' because the ongoing evidence ('puddles were still forming') points to a recent continuous action, not just a completed event.

15. “had already finished” (b)

Use Past Perfect 'had already finished' for a completed action before another past event ('dinner'). 'Already' emphasizes that the homework was done before the reference time.

16. “had been running” (a)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been running' — we see evidence (out of breath) of recent activity.

17. “had owned” (b)

Use Past Perfect 'had owned' because 'own' is a stative verb and cannot be used in continuous form. 'Has owned' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.

18. “had been standing” (b)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been standing' to show the duration ('for hours') that caused a past result ('legs ached'). 'Has stood' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.

19. “had already left” (c)

Use Past Perfect 'had already left' for a completed action before another past event.

20. “had been playing” (a)

Use Past Perfect Continuous 'had been playing' to explain the cause ('was so sweaty') through duration ('all afternoon'). 'Has played' (Present Perfect) is wrong because the situation is entirely in the past.