

Finish the sentence: Past perfect continuous by Jill Hadfield

Level: Upper intermediate

Target age: Secondary / Adult

Time needed: 20 minutes

Grammar objective: to practise the past perfect continuous

Materials: one set of cards for every three or four students

Summary: a small-group card game to practise the past perfect continuous

Before the lesson

Cut up the cards.

Procedure

1. Write the following sentence on the board:

My clothes were all messy because ...

Complete the sentence using the past perfect continuous – for example, 'My clothes were all messy because I'd been tidying up the garage to get ready for our move.' Then, ask the students to think of another possible ending, also using that tense.

If necessary, remind students that we use the past perfect continuous to talk about a situation or activity that was in progress up to or just before a past point in time. It is formed like this:

had + been + -ing

When they've had a moment to think, ask for the students' suggestions. Other possible endings are:

... I'd been gardening.

... I'd been busy painting our lounge.

... I'd been up in the loft reorganizing all our stuff.

Then, as a class, vote on the best ending – students can vote for the one that is the most amusing, the most ingenious, the most befitting ...

2. Now, give each group a set of cards and ask them to place them in a pile face down on the desk.

3. The first player should begin by turning up the top card and reading out the sentence/s on the card. Everyone should think of a way of completing the sentence, using the past perfect continuous.

4. The first player should tell the others his or her sentence. Then, going round the table clockwise, the other players should also try to complete the sentence.

5. When each player has contributed a sentence, the players should decide which is the best sentence. The player with the best sentence keeps the card. The player with most cards at the end of the game is the winner. Circulate while the students are playing the game, offering help and corrections as necessary. You may want to make a note of any misuses of the past perfect continuous and then conduct a class feedback session once the game is over.

6. Ask for feedback from the groups. Who won the most cards? What was the most amusing sentence?

Example endings

The bus didn't come till 10pm. By that time, ... *it had been raining for ages and we were soaked.*

Taylor arrived at the party at 9.30. Up until then, ... *I'd been sitting in a corner not talking to anyone.*

There was a knock on the door at 9 o'clock. I ... *was surprised because I hadn't been expecting anyone.*

When I opened the door the postman was standing there with a huge parcel. I was surprised because ... *I hadn't ordered anything.*

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I started training as a nurse in 2013. Before that,
... *I'd been working in the hospitality industry.*

The waiter finally served our food at 9pm. We
... *were so annoyed because we'd been waiting for one and half hours.*

Harry arrived home, looking upset. He ...
had clearly been walking the streets for hours, in despair.

Susie told me she and Alex were engaged to be married. I was surprised because ... *they'd only been going out for a month.*

I couldn't eat my dinner because ... *I'd been snacking all day.*

She didn't want to move house because she ... *had been living in that house since her childhood.*

He was out of breath – he ... *had been hurrying.*

Myley failed her degree because ... *she'd been partying too hard!*

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