



# Learn English Through Stories

T Series

Upper - Intermediate

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## **Past Tenses 6 by K S Sandhu**

### **The Chaotic Airport Morning**

Grace woke up early on the morning of the big school trip to Paris. She felt excited but also a bit nervous. For weeks, she had been practising her French phrases every evening after dinner. She had been repeating sentences like “Où est la Tour Eiffel?” until her brother complained that she never stopped talking!

The night before, Grace had been packing her suitcase carefully. She had been choosing outfits for three hours when she suddenly realised the rules: only one piece of luggage allowed. She had been filling two big bags already, so she quickly emptied everything onto the bed and started again. In the end, she had to rush out in the evening to buy a smaller backpack because nothing else fitted.

Meanwhile, Irina had been waiting for her e-ticket since the previous afternoon. The travel company had been sending her the wrong times over and over again because of a computer error. When the teacher rang her last night, Irina still hadn't received it, so she had been checking her email every five minutes. Finally, she decided to print an old confirmation from the website.

Lily, on the other hand, seemed completely calm. When the teacher called, Lily had been packing her things neatly for days. She had been organising her backpack with little pockets for snacks, her phone charger, and even a tiny umbrella. “I hate surprises,” she told the teacher with a laugh.

The teacher had been worrying about the hostel all week. The travel agent had been making enquiries about a better place earlier that day because the first one looked dirty and far from the centre. They had been negotiating a cheaper price too, so everyone had been hoping for good news. The agent promised to call first thing in the morning.

At the airport in the evening, the group finally met. Jack arrived looking exhausted. He had been running from the bus stop for twenty minutes because his alarm hadn't gone off. Barry and Gill were soaked to the skin – it had been raining heavily all afternoon, and they had been walking without umbrellas. Emma yawned loudly; she had been studying French grammar until 2 a.m. and now felt very tired. The children in the group were covered in mud

because they had been playing in the park near the station before their parents picked them up.

Yolanda, the youngest, fell asleep on a bench almost immediately. She had been working too hard on her project the night before and had been worrying about forgetting her passport.

In the end, the teacher smiled. Everyone had been preparing in their own way, some calmly, some chaotically. As they boarded the plane, Grace looked out of the window and thought: all the stress and waiting had been leading to this perfect moment.

### **Questions:**

Question 1: Why was Grace feeling a bit nervous before the trip?

Question 2: What problem did Grace have while packing her suitcase the day before?

Question 3: Why had Irina been checking her email every five minutes?

Question 4: Why did Jack arrive at the airport looking exhausted?

Question 5: What had Yolanda been doing the night before that made her fall asleep on the bench?

### **Answers:**

Answer 1: She was feeling a bit nervous because she had been practising her French phrases every evening for weeks (and perhaps worried about speaking French in Paris).

Answer 2: She had been filling two big bags, but then realised they could only check in one piece of luggage, so she had to rush out in the evening to buy a smaller backpack.

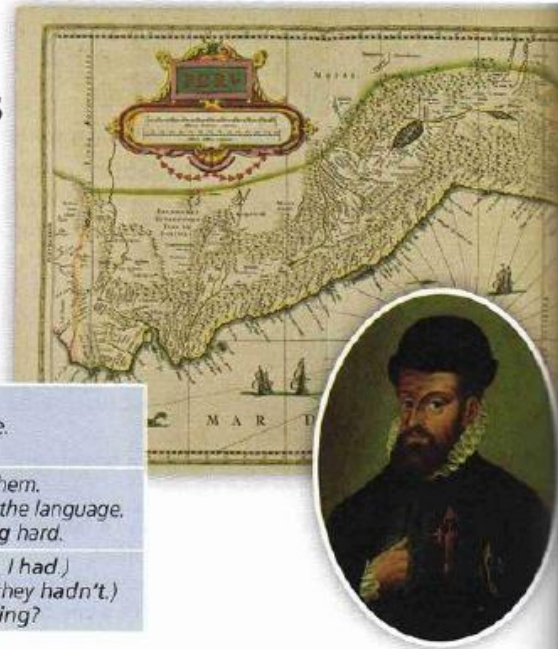
Answer 3: She had been waiting for her e-ticket because the travel company had been sending her the wrong times due to a computer error, and she still hadn't received it when the teacher called.

Answer 4: He had been running from the bus stop for twenty minutes because his alarm hadn't gone off.

Answer 5: She had been working too hard on her project and had been worrying about forgetting her passport.

# 35 Past perfect continuous

Francisco Pizarro **had been exploring** Central and South America for twenty years when he led the famous expedition to Peru which destroyed the Inca Empire.



## 1 Form

POSITIVE	<i>I had been watching them. She had been learning the language. We had been working hard.</i>
NEGATIVE	<i>I had not (hadn't) been watching them. He had not (hadn't) been learning the language. They had not (hadn't) been working hard.</i>
QUESTIONS	<i>Had you been watching them? (Yes, I had.) Had they been working hard? (No, they hadn't.) Which language had she been learning?</i>

## 2 Use

We use the past perfect continuous to talk about an action or situation that was happening in the past before another action or time:

*I **had been learning** French for five years when I went to live in Paris.*

*'How long **had you been living** in the house when you sold it?' 'Oh, about a year.'*

We usually introduce the second action with *when*:

*He'd been taking driving lessons for years **when** he finally passed the test.*

The first action can stop when the second action happens, or it can continue:



## 🔊 Pronunciation ▶ 1.16

## 3 Emphasising time and giving reasons

The past perfect continuous often emphasises a period of time:

*Pizarro **had been exploring** for twenty years when he went to Peru.*

We can use the past perfect continuous to give a reason for an action or feeling in the past:

*Derek was very tired when he arrived – he'd been **driving** in heavy traffic all afternoon.*

## 4 Comparison with other forms

Notice the difference between the past continuous and the past perfect continuous:

*When I arrived home, Brad **was washing** the car. (He was still washing it.)*

*When I arrived home, Brad **had been washing** the car and he was wet. (He was no longer washing the car.)*

The differences between the past perfect simple and continuous are similar to the differences between the present perfect simple and continuous (▶ Unit 40.1).

*I called Jane after I'd **written** my essay. (The essay was finished.)*

*I called Jane after I'd **been writing** my essay for two hours. (The essay wasn't finished.)*

- We use the past perfect simple with a number or amount:  
*I called Jane after I'd **read half the reports**.*  
*I gave up after I'd **phoned six times** without getting through.*
- We do not usually use the past perfect continuous with state verbs. (▶ Unit 29.3)

## Practice

## 1 Write sentences in the past perfect continuous and the past simple using the words below.

▶ 3.05 Listen and check.

0 The explorers / sail / for days / when they / finally see / land

*The explorers had been sailing for days when they finally saw land.*

1 How long / you / work there / when you / become / a director ?

2 I / not sleep / well / for weeks / when I / have / the accident at work

3 Paul / work / really long hours / for six months / when he / become ill

4 How long / Sarah / take / the medicine / before she / get better ?

5 We / not save / hard enough / so we / not can / go on holiday with the others

## 2 Complete the sentences with the past perfect continuous of the verbs from the box.

not listen not wear play rain ~~run~~ work

0 Jack was feeling exhausted because he *had been running* for three hours.

1 Barry and Gill were soaked when they arrived because it ..... heavily.

2 Emma found the essay difficult because she ..... in the lecture.

3 Yolanda fell asleep at her desk because she ..... too hard.

4 The children were dirty because they ..... in the garden.

5 Will had got really sunburnt because he ..... any sunscreen.

## 3 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the email with phrases from A-H below.

▶ 3.06 Listen and check.

Subject Expedition to Bolivia

Hi Liz

Just a quick email to say that I think everyone's ready for the trip tomorrow. I rang round the students this evening to check. Grace has finally got her train ticket – she (0) *H* for it for ages because they (1) ..... a mistake with the time of the train. Inna (2) ..... for her ticket when I spoke to her, so I told her to go online and print it out from there. Lily seems on top of things – she (3) ..... when I called. Oh, Grace had to go out at the last minute and buy a new bag as she (4) ..... two bags before she realised that we can only check in one piece of luggage!

By the way, I haven't got details of the hostel yet. When I spoke to the travel agent yesterday, they (5) ..... enquiries about a better one earlier in the day, and they were waiting to hear back. They're going to call me first thing tomorrow morning. They've been really good, actually – they (6) ..... to change the hostel before calling me because they weren't happy with the first one.

I must go. I (7) ..... to pack before I called the students so I'll finish now. I'll see you at the airport tomorrow evening.

Julia

A was starting

D was packing

G had decided

B had made

E had packed

~~H had been waiting~~

C had been making

F was still waiting

## Answers

### UNIT 35

- 1** 1 How long had you been working there when you became a director?  
2 I hadn't been sleeping well for weeks when I had the accident at work.  
3 Paul had been working really long hours for six months when he became ill.  
4 How long had Sarah been taking the medicine before she got better?  
5 We hadn't been saving hard enough so we couldn't go on holiday with the others.
- 2** 1 had been raining 2 hadn't been listening  
3 had been working 4 had been playing  
5 hadn't been wearing
- 3** 1 B 2 F 3 D 4 E 5 C 6 G 7 A