Past Perfect Continuous - Structure

How do we make the past perfect continuous tense in English?

Note: This is also called the **past perfect progressive** tense.

Positive form

Use the **past perfect of *be* (*had been*)** and the ***verb*-ing form**.

Full form	Short form
I **had been playing**	I**'d been playing**
you **had been playing**	you**'d been playing**
he **had been playing**	he**'d been playing**
she **had been playing**	she**'d been playing**
it **had been playing**	it**'d been playing**
we **had been playing**	we**'d been playing**
they **had been playing**	they**'d been playing**

For example:

- I **had been living** in Sydney since March that year.
- He**'d been staying** at a hotel for weeks before he found an apartment.
- They**'d been cooking** all day when I arrived.

Some notes on short forms:
1. We usually contract ***had*** with personal pronouns in speaking and informal writing: I'd, you'd, he'd, etc.
2. We usually contract ***had*** with the words ***that***, ***this***, ***those*** and ***these*** in speaking, and sometimes in informal writing: that'd, those'd, etc.
3. We often contract ***had*** with nouns and other words in speaking, but not in writing. For example, we do not usually write: ~~Jane'd~~, ~~the dog'd~~, ~~nobody'd~~, etc.
4. We do not usually contract verbs in writing if we have a compound subject: ~~Jane and I'd~~.

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Negative form

Put ***not*** between ***had*** and ***been***.

Full form	Short forms	
I **had not been playing**	I **hadn't been playing**	*I**'d not been playing**
you **had not been playing**	you **hadn't been playing**	you**'d not been playing**
he **had not been playing**	he **hadn't been playing**	he**'d not been playing**
she **had not been playing**	she **hadn't been playing**	she**'d not been playing**
it **had not been playing**	it **hadn't been playing**	it**'d not been playing**
we **had not been playing**	we **hadn't been playing**	we**'d not been playing**
they **had not been playing**	they **hadn't been playing**	they**'d not been playing**

*The structure in the third column is sometimes used in British English, but it is rarely used in other varieties of English. When used in other varieties, it sounds quite formal.

For example:

- You **had not been listening** to the teacher.
- She **had not been studying** every day.
- The computer **hadn't been working** well, so we drew the design by hand.
  (it hadn't been working)
- We **hadn't been going out** much.
- They**'d not been answering** the phone.

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Question forms

Invert the subject and ***had***, and then put a question word (***what***, ***who***, etc.) at the beginning for wh- questions.

Yes/No questions	
	Had I **been playing**?
	Had you **been playing**?
	Had he **been playing**?
	Had she **been playing**?
	Had it **been playing**?
	Had we **been playing**?
	Had they **been playing**?

Wh- questions	
What Who Where When Why How etc.	**had** I **been playing**?
	had you **been playing**?
	had he **been playing**?
	had she **been playing**?
	had it **been playing**?
	had we **been playing**?
	had they **been playing**?

For example:

- **Had** I **been worrying** too much?
- **Had** it **been snowing** before we woke up?
- What **had** you **been doing** all day?
- Where **had** he **been living** before that?
- How long **had** we **been waiting**?

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Short answers

Positive	Negative	
Yes, I **had**.	No, I **hadn't**.	*No, I**'d not**.
Yes, you **had**.	No, you **hadn't**.	No, you**'d not**.
Yes, he **had**.	No, he **hadn't**.	No, he**'d not**.
Yes, she **had**.	No, she **hadn't**.	No, she**'d not**.
Yes, it **had**.	No, it **hadn't**.	No, it**'d not**.
Yes, we **had**.	No, we **hadn't**.	No, we**'d not**.
Yes, they **had**.	No, they **hadn't**.	No, they**'d not**.

*The structure in the third column is sometimes used in British English, but it is rarely used in other varieties of English. When used in other varieties, it sounds quite formal.

Notes:
1. We do not use short forms in positive short answers.
2. We sometimes use full forms in negative short answers (e.g. No, I had not.), but this is rare and mainly used in very formal contexts or for emphasis.

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