

## The Past Continuous

The past continuous tense (also called the past progressive) is used to describe actions that were in progress at a specific time in the past.

### 1. Form (Structure)

The past continuous is formed using:

was / were + verb (-ing)

I / He / She / It → was + verb-ing

You / We / They → were + verb-ing

Examples:

1. I was studying.
2. They were playing football.
3. She was reading a book.

### 2. Uses of the Past Continuous

#### a) Action in progress in the past

An action that was happening at a particular moment.

At 8 p.m., I was watching TV.

She was sleeping when I called.

#### b) Interrupted actions (with past simple)

A longer action is interrupted by a shorter one.

I was studying when the phone rang.

They were walking when it started to rain.

Past continuous = long action

Past simple = short action

#### c) Two actions happening at the same time

Examples:

She was cooking while he was cleaning.

They were talking and laughing.

#### d) Background description (in stories)

Used to describe the scene.

The sun was shining, and birds were singing.

#### 3. Negative Form

was not (wasn't) / were not (weren't) + verb-ing

Examples:

I was not studying.

They weren't listening.

#### 4. Questions

Was / Were + subject + verb-ing?

Examples:

Was she reading?

Were they playing?

Short answers:

Yes, she was. / No, she wasn't.

Yes, they were. / No, they weren't.

#### 5. Time Expressions

Common with past continuous:

- While
- When
- At that moment
- At 5 o'clock yesterday

#### 6. Quick Comparison

Past Continuous

Past Simple

Action in progress

Completed action

I was reading

I read

Interrupted action

Short action

## 7. Practice Exercise

Fill in the gaps with the correct form:

1. She \_\_\_\_\_ (study) when I arrived.
2. They \_\_\_\_\_ (play) football at 6 p.m.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ (not / sleep) when you called.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV?
5. We \_\_\_\_\_ (have) dinner while they \_\_\_\_\_ (talk).

Answers

Was studying

Were playing

Was not sleeping / wasn't sleeping

Were you watching

Were having / were talking