

Past Continuous

- 1 We form the Past Continuous like this:

POSITIVE

I/He/She/It was } waiting.
You/We/They were }

NEGATIVE

	FULL FORM	SHORT FORM
I/He/She/It	was not	wasn't
You/We/They	were not	weren't

waiting.

QUESTIONS

Was I/he/she/it } waiting?
Were you/we/they }

(For rules on the spelling of -ing forms (e.g. **waiting**), see Appendix 2 on page 243.)

- 2 Look at this example:

A: What **were** you **doing** at seven o'clock last night?

B: I **was driving** home from work.

Driving		
6.30	7.00	7.15

I **was living** in Japan in 2001. (I lived there from 1999 to 2003.)

We use the Past Continuous for an action or situation that was in progress at a particular time in the past (e.g. at seven p.m., in 2001).

- 3 Now look at this:

When I **walked** into the room, Ann **was writing** postcards and Keith **was reading**.



We use the Past Simple (**walked**) for a completed action. We use the Past Continuous (**was writing**) for an action in progress in the past.

- 4 We can use **when** or **while** before the Past Continuous:

I met her **when/while** we **were working** for the same company. (**when** = during the time)

We can only use **when** (NOT **while**) before the Past Simple:

When I **met** her, we **were working** for the same company. (**when** = at the time)

Practice

- A Complete the sentences by putting the verbs in brackets () into the Past Continuous.

- It was snowing (snow) when I left home this morning.
- 1 I tried to explain my problem to her, but she (not/listen).
- 2 He (talk) on the phone when I arrived.
- 3 A lot of people (wait) for the 7.30 bus last night.
- 4 I (live) in London when I met them.
- 5 I nearly had an accident this morning. A car (come) towards me, but I moved quickly out of the way.
- 6 At the end of the first half of the game, they (win).
- 7 It was a sunny afternoon and people (sit) on the grass in the park. Then it suddenly started to rain.
- 8 Which hotel (you/stay) in when you lost your passport?
- 9 Fortunately, I (not/drive) too fast when the child walked into the road in front of me.

- 10 I looked out of the window, and I saw that it (not/rain) any more.
 11 What (you/do) at three o'clock yesterday afternoon?

B Describe what the people in the picture were doing when Rick came into the room. Use the correct verb from the box in the Past Continuous.



► George was reading a newspaper.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Julie a sandwich. | 5 Barbara a letter. |
| 2 Sue and Liz table tennis. | 6 Rita her hair. |
| 3 Frank television. | 7 Alison to some music. |
| 4 Caroline on the floor. | 8 Ann a picture. |

C Look at this information about Shirley and Kevin and complete the sentences about them, using the Past Continuous (*I was doing*) or the Past Simple (*I did*).

SHIRLEY		KEVIN	
1980–86	lived in New York	1982–90	lived in Washington
1983–86	studied at university	1983–85	did a course in Computing
1986	left university	1985–1990	worked as a computer operator
1986–90	worked as a translator	1989	met Shirley
1989	met Kevin	1990–1995	ran his own company
1992	married Kevin	1992	married Shirley

- In 1982 Shirley was living in New York.
- 1 In 1984 Kevin in Washington.
- 2 In 1984 Shirley at university.
- 3 In 1984 Kevin a course in computing.
- 4 When Shirley university in 1986, Kevin as a computer operator.
- 5 When Kevin Shirley, she as a translator.
- 6 While Shirley as a translator, she Kevin.
- 7 In 1992 Kevin his own company.
- 8 While he his own company, Kevin Shirley.



Past Simple or Past Continuous

1 Compare the Past Simple and the Past Continuous:

PAST SIMPLE

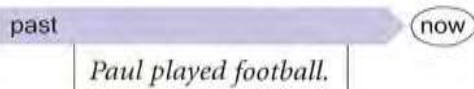
He *talked* to her last week.
I *didn't talk* to her yesterday.
Did you *talk* to your sister?

PAST CONTINUOUS

He *was talking* to her when I saw him.
I *wasn't talking* to anyone, I was watching the TV.
Were you *talking* to her before I came?

2 We use the Past Simple to talk about a complete event in the past:

*Last Saturday morning, Paul **played** football in the park.*

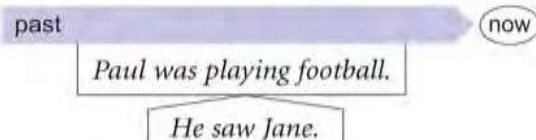


Here are some more examples:

*On Sunday I **made** a cake.
It **rained** a lot on Saturday morning.*

We use the Past Continuous to talk about an action that was in progress, when something else happened:

*Last Saturday, Paul **was playing** football in the park when he saw Jane.*



Here are some more examples:

*The phone rang while I **was making** a cake.
It **was raining** when we left home.*

3 We often use the Past Simple to talk about one event that followed another event:

*When Ann James **left** university, she **went** to work for a bank. She **left** the bank after five years, and **wrote** a book which ...*

In a story we often use the Past Continuous to say what was in progress, when something happened:

*The sun **was shining**. People **were sitting** under the trees or **walking** around the park. Suddenly a car **drove** into the park ...*

Practice

A Use the Past Simple and the Past Continuous to make sentences from the words in brackets ().

- (The police/arrive/while/I/have/breakfast)

The police arrived while I ~~was~~ having breakfast.

- 1 (The storm/start/while/they/drive/home)

- 2 (I/see/an accident/while/I/wait/for the bus)

- 3 (Mary/go/to several concerts/while/she/stay/in London)

- (I/have/breakfast/when/the police/arrive)

I ~~was~~ having breakfast when the police arrived.

- 4 (My father/cook/the dinner/when/he/burn/his fingers)

- 5 (The soldiers/prepare/to leave/when/the bomb/explode)

B Complete these texts using the Past Simple or the Past Continuous of the verbs in brackets ().

- Beethoven wrote..... (write) nine symphonies; he was writing.. (write) another symphony when he died.
- 1 Last Saturday Tom wanted to make two salads. He (make) the first one in five minutes. He (make) the second one when his guests (arrive), and they (help) him to finish it.
- 2 The artist Gaudi (design) several houses in Barcelona, Spain. Later he (start) work on a church. He (work) on the church when he (die).
- 3 Last month a bank robber (escape) while the police (take) him to prison. Later they (catch) him again, and this time they (lock) him up without any problem.
- 4 Philip's football team were lucky last Saturday. After twenty minutes they (lose), but in the end they (win) the game by four goals to two.
- 5 John Lennon (sing) and (play) on many records with the Beatles. After that he (record) several songs without the Beatles. He (prepare) a new record when Mark Chapman (shoot) him.
- 6 The evening was getting darker; the street lights (come) on. People (hurry) home after work. I (stand) in a queue at the bus stop. Suddenly somebody (grab) my bag.

C A policewoman is interviewing Mary Croft about last Friday evening. Look at the pictures and complete the conversation. Use the Past Simple or the Past Continuous of the words in brackets ().



Policewoman: What time (►) did you get..... (you/get) home from work?

Mary: At about six o'clock.

Policewoman: And what (1)..... (you/do) after you got home?

Mary: I read the newspaper.

Policewoman: Did anything happen while (2)..... (read) the paper?

Mary: Yes, the phone (3)..... (ring).

Policewoman: What (4)..... (you/do) when your husband came home?

Mary: I was watching TV, and I (5)..... (drink) a cup of coffee.

Policewoman: Did you and your husband stay at home?

Mary: No, I (6)..... (drink) my coffee. Then I put on my raincoat, and we (7)..... (go) out at seven o'clock.

Policewoman: Why (8)..... (you/put) your raincoat on?

Mary: Because it (9)..... (rain), of course.