

UNIT 3

Past Continuous



Were Paul and Claire working at 8 o'clock last night?
No, they weren't.
They were having dinner at a restaurant.

We form the past continuous with **was/were** (past simple of the verb to be) and the main verb with the **-ing** suffix. We form questions by putting **was/were** before the subject. We form negations by putting the word **not** after **was/were**.

Affirmative			
I	was	} studying.	
He/She/It	was		
You/We/They	were		
Interrogative			
Was	I	} studying?	
Was	he/she/it		
Were	you/we/they		
Negative			
	Long form	Short form	
I	was not	wasn't	} studying.
He/She/It	was not	wasn't	
You/We/They	were not	weren't	

1 A fire broke out yesterday at Crofton Electronics. What were the people doing when the fire broke out? Look at the pictures. In pairs, ask and answer questions using the prompts below, as in the example.

SA: What was Tim doing?
SB: He was sitting at his desk.

1 Tim/sit/at his desk	2 Jim and Robert/ check/some reports
3 Sarah/talk/on the phone	4 the directors/ have/a meeting
5 Mary/work/on the computer	6 Kim/read/a letter

2 Put the verbs in brackets into the past continuous.

- A: What 1) *...was happening...* (happen) at the time of the robbery?
B: Well, I 2) (sit) in my office. I 3) (talk) to an employee. Some of the staff 4) (put) food onto the shelves. Several customers 5) (do) their shopping and a cashier 6) (stand) behind the till.
- A: Can you tell me anything about the robbers?
B: Yes. They 7) (wear) black masks and they 8) (hold) guns. They 9) (shout).
- A: How did they get away?
B: They drove off in a car which 10) (wait) outside.

Use

We use the past continuous:

- ◆ for an action which was in progress at a stated time in the past. We do not know when the action started or finished.



At three o'clock yesterday afternoon Mike and his son **were washing** the dog. (We do not know when they started or finished washing the dog.)

- ◆ for a past action which was in progress when another action interrupted it. We use the **past continuous** for the action in progress (longer action) and the **past simple** for the action which interrupted it (shorter action).

He **was reading** a newspaper **when** his wife **came**. (was reading = longer action; came = shorter action)



- ◆ for two or more actions which were happening at the same time in the past (simultaneous actions).



The people **were watching** while the cowboy **was riding** the bull.

- ◆ to give the background information in a story.

The sun **was shining** and the birds **were singing**. Tom **was driving** his old truck through the forest.



Time Expressions

Time expressions used with the past continuous include:

while, when, as, all day/night/morning, etc.

when/while/as + past continuous (longer action)
when + past simple (shorter action)

3 Match Column A with Column B.

Column A

- 1 While I was driving home,e.....
- 2 We were watching the children
- 3 He cut his finger
- 4 At eight o'clock yesterday morning
- 5 As she was crossing the street,
- 6 While they were talking,

Column B

- a as he was chopping wood.
- b he was sleeping in his bed.
- c while they were playing.
- d she slipped and fell.
- e I ran out of petrol.
- f the doorbell rang.

4 Join the sentences using *as, when* or *while*, as in the example.

- 1 Tina was cooking. She burnt herself.
...*As/When/While Tina was cooking, she burnt herself.* ...
...*Tina was cooking when she burnt herself.* ...
- 2 Laura was making some tea. She dropped the kettle.
- 3 Mrs Jason was sitting in the garden. It started raining.
- 4 Peter was driving his car. He got a flat tyre.
- 5 She was walking in the park. A dog attacked her.

5 Put the verbs in brackets into the past simple or past continuous. Which is the longer action in each sentence?

- 1 As I ...*was doing*... (do) the washing-up, I ...*broke*... (break) a glass. "*Doing the washing-up is the longer action.*"
- 2 We (walk) in the woods when the storm (begin).

- 3 John (repair) his motor bike when his mother (arrive).
- 4 I (eat) my lunch when the phone (ring).
- 5 He (ride) his bicycle to school when he (drop) his bag.
- 6 We (see) a bad accident as we (drive) to the airport.
- 7 Tom (watch) the match when the TV (break down).
- 8 We (talk) when she (come) into the room.

Short Answers

e.g. *Were you sleeping at eleven o'clock last night?*
Yes, I was.

Were you ...?	Yes, I was/we were. No, I wasn't/we weren't.
Was he/she/it ...?	Yes, he/she/it was. No, he/she/it wasn't.
Were they ...?	Yes, they were. No, they weren't.

- 6** Yesterday, the people in the picture had to wait two hours for their boat which was late. What were they doing while they were waiting? Look at the picture and describe it using the past continuous.

e.g. *The two girls were playing with a ball.*



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Look at the picture in ex. 6 again and, in pairs, ask and answer questions, as in the example.

- 1 the two girls / play / tennis?
 SA: *Were the two girls playing tennis?*
 SB: *No, they weren't. They were playing volleyball.*
- 2 the young man / listen to / music?

- 3 the older man / read / a book?

- 4 the women / knit?

- 5 the Japanese tourists / take / pictures?

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Put the verbs in brackets into the past continuous.

A Yesterday, I went for a walk in the park. While I was there, I saw lots of children who 1) *...were playing...* (play). There was a man who 2) (walk) his dogs. He 3) (throw) sticks and the dogs 4) (run) to catch them. A gardener 5) (plant) some flowers and some old ladies 6) (sit) on a park bench enjoying the warm sunshine. It was lovely.

B Harriet and Liam got married last weekend. It was a beautiful wedding. The bridesmaids 1) (wear) pink dresses and they 2) (all/carry) small bouquets of pink and white flowers. The photographer 3) (take) photographs and the bride's mother 4) (cry) because she was so happy. The sun 5) (shine) and the couple 6) (smile) at everyone.

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In pairs, ask and answer questions, as in the example.

- 1 at six o'clock yesterday evening?
 SA: *What were you doing at six o'clock yesterday evening?*
 SB: *I was doing my English homework.*
- 2 at two o'clock this morning?
- 3 at half past nine last Sunday evening?
- 4 an hour ago?
- 5 at noon last Saturday?

Past Continuous versus Past Simple

Past Continuous

We use the past continuous for:

- an action which was in progress (was happening) at a stated time in the past. We do not know when the action started or finished.



At nine o'clock yesterday morning, the plane **was flying** to Tahiti from New York. (We do not know when it left or reached its destination.)

- two actions which were happening at the same time in the past.



He **was listening** carefully while they **were explaining** the plan to him.

Past simple

We use the past simple for:

- a complete action at a stated time in the past.



The plane **landed** at the airport at eight o'clock yesterday morning. (The time is stated. The action is complete. The plane landed.)

- actions which happened immediately one after the other in the past.



First she **read** the advertisement and then she **called** the company.

10 Put the verbs in brackets into the past continuous or the past simple.

- We **went** (go) swimming every week when we were young.
- Simon..... (dance) when he fell and hurt his leg.
- Why (you/laugh) all through your history lesson yesterday?
- I (drink) a glass of milk every day when I was a child.
- Todd often (ride) horses when he was a boy.
- Bill (write) a letter when his mother came home.
- It (rain) while I was waiting for the bus.
- I (play) the guitar when I was young, but I don't any more.
- Debbie (sing) in the school choir many years ago.
- Liz (clean) the windows when I saw her.

11 Put the verbs in brackets into the past continuous or the past simple.

- A Steve 1) **had** (have) an accident yesterday. He 2) (drive) his car when a bird 3) (fly) into the windscreen. He 4) (try) to stop quickly but he 5) (crash) into a wall. Luckily, he 6) (not/be) hurt.
- B Last week, I 1) (go) to a talk by a famous writer. He 2) (talk) about his new book when I 3) (arrive). He 4) (give) such an interesting talk that I 5) (be) disappointed when it 6) (end).
- C Julie 1) (tidy) her bedroom last weekend. While she 2) (tidy) it, she 3) (find) some of the toys she 4) (have) when she was a child. She 5) (not/want) to throw them away, so she 6) (put) them in a box and 7) (store) them in the attic.

UNIT 3

Past Continuous

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Put the verbs in brackets into the past continuous or the past simple. Then, put the pictures in the right order.



It 1) *...was...* (be) a beautiful spring morning when Emma and her father 2) (decide) to visit Seaton Castle. The sun 3) (shine) and the birds 4) (sing). Emma 5) (feel) very excited. The castle 6) (be) very old and made of stone. They 7) (climb) the steps to the top of the tower. While they 8) (admire) the view, they 9) (hear) some noises. They 10) (look) around but they 11) (not/see) anybody. 'That's funny,' said Emma. 'I 12) (think) I 13) (see) someone standing over there.' After a while they 14) (decide) to visit the cellar of the castle. Emma 15) (examine) an old barrel when she 16) (hear) the door of the cellar close behind them. 'Dad,' she 17) (say), 'don't close the door!' 'But, I 18) (not/close) it, dear,' her father said. Emma 19) (turn) around and 20) (see) a shadow on the wall. She 21) (know) then that the ghost of Seaton Castle 22) (watch) them!

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Put the verbs in brackets into the past simple or the past continuous.

Dear Rick,

I'm writing to you from my hotel in Switzerland.

I'm having a lovely time here but you can't imagine what 1) *...happened...* (happen) to me yesterday. I 2) (be) on the mountain with my friends and we 3) (have) a lovely time because the snow 4) (be) perfect for skiing. Unfortunately the sun 5) (shine) on the snow, so it 6) (be) difficult to see. Suddenly, I 7) (hit) a rock and I 8) (fall) over. Luckily I 9) (not/be) seriously hurt — I just 10) (get) a few bruises. Now I'm trying to be more careful!

I'll see you when I get back.

Best wishes,
Kevin

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Correct the mistakes.

- Philip was washing the car while the fire started.
- Neil was studying when his sister was listening to music.
- Harriet was opening the door and walked into the house.
- We were having lunch at a lovely restaurant every day when we were on holiday.
- Brian drank tea at five o'clock yesterday afternoon.
- Dad was repairing the TV while Mum cooked dinner.
- I was going to the cinema last Saturday.
- I was buying a new dress for my party yesterday.
- While Jeff built the garden shed, he hurt himself.
- While the teacher were speaking, the students were listening to him.

Revision Box

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Put the verbs in brackets into the present continuous, present simple, past simple or past continuous.

- I ...*was cleaning*... (clean) the windows when the telephone (ring).
- 'What is that noise?' 'James (repair) his bike at the moment.'
- He (read) a book when his mother (call) him.
- '..... (be) you busy?' 'No, what (you/want) me to do?'
- They (sing) while we (play) some music.
- Susan is a nurse. She usually (work) at night.

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Choose the correct answer.

- The earth ...*B*... round the sun.
A moved B moves C is moving
- Sarah a new car last week.
A is buying B buy C bought
- I when suddenly the dog began to bark.
A study B studied C was studying
- They hard at the moment.
A are working B were working C worked
- I home from work when it began to snow.
A am walking B walk C was walking
- Jane the receiver and dialled the number.
A lifts B was lifting C lifted
- Walt Disney Mickey Mouse.
A was creating B creates C created
- Helen to the gym every day, but now she doesn't.
A used to go B didn't use to go C was going
- We for a new house at the moment.
A are looking B look C looked
- Ted his father in the garden every Sunday.
A was helping B helps C is helping
- The ferry to Calais at 3 o'clock every day.
A leave B leaves C was leaving
- You your music too loud! I can't stand it!
A were always playing B always play
C are always playing

ORAL Activity

Look at the picture. It shows what the people were doing/did when a bank robbery happened. In pairs, ask and answer questions using the prompts below as in the example.

e.g. SA: *What was the manager doing?*

SB: *He was talking on the phone.*

SA: *What did he do when he saw the robbers?*

SB: *He stood up.*

manager / talk on the phone / stand up
cashier / count some money / put his hands up
child / sit on a chair / start to cry
old lady / wait in the queue / faint



WRITING Activity

Imagine that one of the people who saw the robbery is writing a letter to a friend to tell him/her what was happening/ happened on that day. Using the picture and your notes from the Oral Activity, complete the letter.

Dear (friend's name),

I'm writing to tell you what happened to me yesterday while I was depositing some money in the bank.

I was standing in the queue when two bank robbers suddenly appeared at the door.

.....

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