

# Simple Past vs. Past Continuous

## Simple Past

We use the **simple past** to talk about:

**Completed** actions, **habits** and **facts** in the past.



- I **went** to the cinema **yesterday**.
- I **always visited** my grandparents in my summer holidays **when I was little**.
- I **lived** near Liverpool for a couple of years.

## Past Continuous

The **past continuous** is used to express:

**Interrupted** actions, **specific time** as an **interruption** and **parallel** actions.



- I **was watching** TV **when** the phone rang.
- **Last night at 7pm**, I **was having** dinner.
- **While** she **was doing** her homework, her brother **was playing** football.

Complete the sentences with past simple or continuous

- |                    |   |                               |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. We              | (cycle) when the rain                     | (start).                      |
| 2. He              | (break) the vase while he                 | (play) ball at home.          |
| 3. My mum          | (come) in while I                         | (surf) on the net.            |
| 4. The electricity | (go off) as I                             | (bake) a cake.                |
| 5. Sandra          | (catch) when her sister                   | (fall) down the stairs.       |
| 6. I               | (play) golf when it                       | (begin) to rain.              |
| 7. While she       | (read) a novel, her sister                | (turn on) the CD player.      |
| 8. They            | (walk) along the beach when they          | (see) the accident.           |
| 9. We              | (study) when we                           | (hear) a terrible noise.      |
| 10. While she      | (do) the ironing, her husband             | (set) the table.              |
| 11. We             | (dance) when he                           | (faint).                      |
| 12. When he        | (fall) down the tree, he                  | (break) his leg.              |
| 13. I              | (be) shocked when I                       | (hear) the bad news.          |
| 14. She            | (cry) when I                              | (see) her.                    |
| 15. My parents     | (sit) in the garden while we              | (play) badminton.             |
| 16.                | you                                       | (swim) in the sea at 6.00 am? |
| 17. Bob            | (lie) in the garden when it               | (start) to rain.              |
| 18. As I           | (put) the baby to bed, the phone          | (ring).                       |
| 19. What           | you (do) when Dan                         | (fall)?                       |
| 20. How            | you                                       | (break) the window?           |
| 21. I              | (write) an e-mail when the postman        | (deliver) his letter!         |
| 22. When I         | (leave) home yesterday, some dogs         | (sit) near the front gate.    |
| 23. John           | (not swim) at four o'clock. He            | (play) football.              |
| 24. While I        | (swim) in the river, I                    | (see) some frogs.             |
| 25. Jim            | (not pay) attention when he               | (drive) his car into a tree.  |
| 26. What you       | (do) while she                            | (sleep)?                      |
| 27. Everyone       | (sleep) when the robbers                  | (break in).                   |
| 28. We             | (arrive) at the station just as the train | (leave).                      |

### Complete the sentences with *while* or *when*.

1. We were playing basketball \_\_\_\_\_ it began to rain.
2. The dog was barking \_\_\_\_\_ we were sleeping.
3. I was watching TV \_\_\_\_\_ she called.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the phone rang, she was writing a letter.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ we were having the picnic, it started to rain.
6. What were you doing \_\_\_\_\_ the earthquake started?
7. You were not listening to me \_\_\_\_\_ I told you to turn the oven off.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ John was sleeping last night, someone stole his car.
9. I was just getting into the bath \_\_\_\_\_ the telephone rang.
10. Were you listening \_\_\_\_\_ he was talking?
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Ellen was reading, Tim was watching television.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ she came home from school she really didn't look well

### Complete the text with past simple or past continuous

A lorry driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(drive)** 200 penguins to London Zoo when his lorry \_\_\_\_\_ **(break)**  
 down on the motorway. The driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(get)** out of the cab and \_\_\_\_\_ **(look)** at  
 the engine when a second lorry driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(stop)** in front of him and \_\_\_\_\_ **(ask)** if he  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **(need)** help.

The penguins' driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(explain)** that he \_\_\_\_\_ **(take)** the penguins to the zoo and  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **(ask)** if the other man would take the penguins there. He \_\_\_\_\_ **(agreed)**.



Today \_\_\_\_\_ **(not be)** not a good day. First of all, my alarm clock \_\_\_\_\_ **(not ring)**. Then, while  
 I \_\_\_\_\_ **(have)** a shower, my dad \_\_\_\_\_ **(go)** to work so I had to walk to school.  
 It \_\_\_\_\_ **(rain)** and I got very wet. When I \_\_\_\_\_ **(walk)** into class everyone \_\_\_\_\_ **(study)**  
 hard and in silence. The teacher \_\_\_\_\_ **(look)** at me and said, 'Good afternoon John. How nice of you  
 to join us. 'Everyone \_\_\_\_\_ **(laugh)**. I \_\_\_\_\_ **(be)** so embarrassed.