

A Study this example situation:



Yesterday Karen and Joe played tennis. They started at 10 o'clock and finished at 11.30. So, at 10.30 they **were playing** tennis.

they **were playing** = they were in the middle of playing, they had not finished

was/were + -ing is the past continuous:

he/she/it	was	playing
we/you/they	were	doing

working etc.

B I was doing something = I was in the middle of doing it at a certain time. The action or situation started before this time, but had not finished:



C Compare I was doing (past continuous) and I did (past simple):

I was doing (= in the middle of an action)

- ☐ We **were walking** home when I met Dan. (in the middle of walking home)
- ☐ Kate **was watching** TV when we arrived.

I did (= complete action)

- ☐ We **walked** home after the party last night. (= all the way, completely)
- ☐ Kate **watched** TV a lot when she was ill last year.

D You can say that something **happened** (past simple) in the middle of something else (past continuous):

- ☐ Matt **phoned** while we **were having** dinner.
- ☐ It **was raining** when I **got** up.
- ☐ I **saw** you in the park yesterday. You **were sitting** on the grass and **reading** a book.
- ☐ I **hurt** my back while I **was working** in the garden.

But we use the past simple to say that one thing happened after another:

- ☐ I **was walking** along the road when I **saw** Dan. So I **stopped**, and we **talked** for a while.

Compare:

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|--|--|
| ☐ When Karen arrived, we were having dinner. (= we had already started before she arrived) | ☐ When Karen arrived, we had dinner. (= Karen arrived, and then we had dinner) |
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E Some verbs (for example, **know** and **want**) are not normally used in continuous forms (**is + -ing**, **was + -ing** etc.). See Unit 4A for a list of these verbs.

- ☐ We were good friends. We **knew** each other well. (not we were knowing)
- ☐ I was enjoying the party, but Chris **wanted** to go home. (not was wanting)

6.1 Complete the sentences. Choose from:

was looking was wearing wasn't listening weren't looking
was snowing was working were sitting were you going

- Today Helen is wearing a skirt. Yesterday she was wearing trousers.
- 'What did he say?' 'I don't know. I _____.'
- We _____ at the back of the theatre. We couldn't hear very well.
- This time last year Steve _____ on a farm.
- They didn't see me. They _____ in my direction.
- The weather was bad. It was very cold and it _____.
- I saw you in your car. Where _____?
- I saw Kate a few minutes ago. She _____ for you.

6.2 Which goes with which?

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1 When I got to the cafe | a when she was living in Rome. | 1 <u>f</u> |
| 2 We fell asleep | b she was working in a clothes shop. | 2 _____ |
| 3 Amy learnt Italian | c when I was driving home. | 3 _____ |
| 4 Tom didn't come out with us | d but nobody was watching it. | 4 _____ |
| 5 The car began to make a strange noise | e while we were watching a film. | 5 _____ |
| 6 The TV was on | f my friends were waiting for me. | 6 _____ |
| 7 When I first met Jessica | g because he wasn't feeling well. | 7 _____ |

6.3 Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.

 1 I <u>saw</u> (see) Sue in town yesterday, but she _____ (not/see) me. She _____ (look) the other way.	 2 I _____ (cycle) home yesterday when a man _____ (step) out into the road in front of me. I _____ (go) quite fast, but luckily I _____ (manage) to stop in time, and I _____ (not/hit) him.
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6.4 Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.

- Jenny was waiting (wait) for me when I arrived (arrive).
- 'What _____ (you / do) at this time yesterday?' 'I was asleep.'
- '_____ (you / go) out last night?' 'No, I was too tired.'
- How fast _____ (you / drive) when the accident _____ (happen)?
- Sam _____ (take) a picture of me while I _____ (not / look).
- We were in a very difficult position. We _____ (not / know) what to do, so we _____ (do) nothing.
- I haven't seen Alan for ages. When I last _____ (see) him, he _____ (try) to find a job.
- I _____ (walk) along the street when suddenly I _____ (hear) something behind me. Somebody _____ (follow) me. I was scared and I _____ (start) to run.
- When I was young, I _____ (want) to be a pilot. Later I _____ (change) my mind.
- Last night I _____ (drop) a plate when I _____ (do) the washing up. Fortunately it _____ (not / break).

→ Additional exercise 1 (page 302)