

47 Past continuous



1 Form

POSITIVE

I/He/She/It **was working**.

We/You/They **were working**.

NEGATIVE

I/He/She/It **was not (wasn't) working**.

We/You/They **were not (weren't) working**.

QUESTIONS

Was I/he/she/it working?

Were we/you/they working?

SHORT ANSWERS

Yes, I/he/she/it **was**.

Yes, we/you/they **were**.

No, we/you/they **weren't**.

No, we/you/they **weren't**.

We form the past continuous with *was/were* + the *-ing* form of the verb.

2 Use

We use the past continuous

- to describe an action at or around a time in the past:

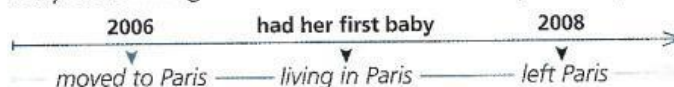
At seven o'clock Marek **was making** the dinner and Isabella **was putting** the children to bed.
I **was watching** TV at nine o'clock.



The action started before nine o'clock and can continue after it.

- for temporary situations in the past:

Sally **was living** in Paris when she had her first baby.



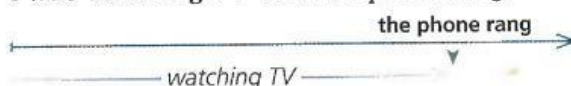
- to describe a scene in the past, especially when you are telling a story:

When we arrived at the beach, the sun **was shining**.

They **were cleaning** the swimming pool when we got to the hotel.

- to describe something you did until an event interrupted you and stopped you:

I **was watching** TV when the phone **rang**.



James Dean **was driving** a Porsche when he **died**.

Gerald **was playing** football when he **hurt** his arm.



We don't usually use verbs, such as *like, see, hear, think, agree* in the past continuous.

Practice

GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the text. Use past continuous forms of the verbs in brackets () and short forms.

A few years ago we (0) *were living* (live) in France at the time of the Cannes film festival. My wife (00) *wasn't working* (not work) that weekend so we decided to drive to Cannes to see some of the new films. The sun (1) (shine) when we arrived and the town looked beautiful. It was very busy – lots of people (2) (walk) in the streets. But it wasn't very hot that day so people (3) (not sunbathe) on the beach. We got to our hotel and went to the restaurant. We had a big surprise – Juliette Binoche (4) (sit) at the back of the restaurant! But she (5) (not have) lunch, she (6) (talk) to some other famous film stars. It was so exciting!

Complete the questions and short answers below. Use information from Exercise 1.

1. *Was* the sun *shining* when they arrived? – Yes, it was.
 2. lots of people in the streets? – Yes, they were.
 3. people on the beach? – No, they weren't.
 4. Who at the back of the restaurant? – Juliette Binoche
 5. she lunch? – No, she wasn't.

GRAMMAR IN USE Last night there was a robbery at the Denmore Hotel. The police want to know what everybody was doing at five past eight. Look at the photos from the hotel cameras. Read all the questions before you answer them.



Mr Denby



Steve Burton



Mr and Mrs Grant



Maria



Alfredo and Alex



Marco

1. Was Mr Denby carrying some suitcases? *No, he wasn't. He was swimming in the pool.*
 2. Was Steve Burton eating in the restaurant?
 3. Were Mr and Mrs Grant paying the bill?
 4. Was Maria swimming in the pool?
 5. Were Alfredo and Alex using the Internet?
 6. Was Marco cooking in the kitchen?