Unit 119

For, during and while

A For and during

We use **for** + a period of time to say how long something goes on:
for **two hours** for **a week** for **ages**

- We watched TV **for two hours** last night.
- Jess is going away **for a week** in September.
- Where have you been? I've been waiting **for ages**.
- Are you going away **for the weekend**?

I fell asleep **during the movie**.

We use **during** + *noun* to say when something happens (*not* how long):
during **the movie** during **our holiday** during **the night**

- I fell asleep **during the movie**.
- We met some really nice people **during our holiday**.
- The ground is wet. It must have rained **during the night**.

With 'time words' (for example: **the morning / the afternoon / the summer**), you can usually say **in** or **during**:

- It must have rained **in the night**. *or* ... **during the night**.
- I'll phone you sometime **during the afternoon**. *or* ... **in the afternoon**.

You cannot use **during** to say how long something goes on:

- It rained **for** three days without stopping. (*not* during three days)

Compare **during** and **for**:

- I fell asleep **during the movie**. I was asleep **for half an hour.**

B During and while

Compare:

We use **during** + *noun*:

- I fell asleep **during the movie**. (*noun*)
- We met a lot of interesting people **during our holiday**.
- Robert suddenly began to feel ill **during the exam**.

We use **while** + *subject* + *verb*:

- I fell asleep **while I was watching TV**. (*subject + verb*)
- We met a lot of interesting people **while we were on holiday**.
- Robert suddenly began to feel ill **while he was doing the exam**.

Some more examples of **while**:

- We saw Clare **while we were waiting** for the bus.
- **While you were** out, there was a phone call for you.
- Alex read a book **while I watched** TV.

Alex read a book **while I watched** TV.

When you are talking about the future, use the *present* (*not* will) after **while**:

- I'm going to Singapore next week. I hope to see some friends of mine **while I'm** there.(*not* while I will be there)
- What are you going to do **while** you're waiting? (*not* while you'll be waiting)

See also Unit 25.

For and since → Unit 12A While + -ing → Unit 68B

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exercises

119.1 Put in **for** or **during**.

1 It rained *for* three days without stopping.
2 I fell asleep *during* the movie.
3 I went to the theatre last night. I met Sue ..... the interval.
4 Martin hasn't lived in Britain all his life. He lived in Brazil ..... four years.
5 Production at the factory was seriously affected ..... the strike.
6 I felt really ill last week. I could hardly eat anything ..... three days.
7 I waited for you ..... half an hour and decided that you weren't coming.
8 Sarah was very angry with me. She didn't speak to me ..... a week.
9 We usually go out at weekends, but we don't go out ..... the week very often.
10 Jack started a new job a few weeks ago. Before that he was out of work ..... six months.
11 I need a break. I think I'll go away ..... a few days.
12 The president gave a long speech. She spoke ..... two hours.
13 We were hungry when we arrived. We hadn't had anything to eat ..... the journey.
14 We were hungry when we arrived. We hadn't had anything to eat ..... eight hours.

119.2 Put in **during** or **while**.

1 We met a lot of interesting people *while* we were on holiday.
2 We met a lot of interesting people *during* our holiday.
3 I met Mike ..... I was shopping.
4 ..... I was on holiday, I didn't read any newspapers or watch TV.
5 ..... our stay in Paris, we went to a lot of museums and galleries.
6 My phone rang ..... we were having dinner.
7 There was a lot of noise ..... the night. What was it?
8 I'd been away for many years. ..... that time, many things had changed.
9 What did they say about me ..... I was out of the room?
10 I went out for dinner last night. Unfortunately I began to feel ill ..... the meal and had to go home.
11 Please don't interrupt me ..... I'm speaking.
12 There were many interruptions ..... the president's speech.
13 Can you hold my bag ..... I try on this jacket?
14 We were hungry when we arrived. We hadn't had anything to eat ..... we were travelling.

119.3 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

1 I fell asleep while *I was watching TV.*
2 I fell asleep during *the movie.*
3 Nobody came to see me while .....
4 Can you wait for me while .....
5 Most of the students looked bored during .....
6 I was asked a lot of questions during .....
7 Don't open the car door while .....
8 The lights suddenly went out while .....
9 It started to rain during .....
10 It started to rain while .....
11 What are you going to do while .....

→ Additional exercise 33 (page 321)

LIVEWORKSHEETS