PAST CONTINUOUS + SIMPLE PAST

We often use the Past Continuous with the Simple Past when a long action is interrupted by a short action.
We use the words WHILE or WHEN to join the ideas.

WHILE + long action (past continuous): I was watching TV (this action was in progress)
WHEN + short action (simple past): the earthquake started (this action interrupted)

There are 4 basic combinations:

While	Past Continuous	,	Simple Past
When	Simple Past	,	Past Continuous
	Simple Past	while	Past Continuous
	Past Continuous	when	Simple Past

EXAMPLES:

While I was watching TV, the earthquake started.
When the earthquake started, I was watching TV.
The earthquake started while I was watching TV.
I was watching TV when the earthquake started.

ACTIVITY 1. Complete the sentences with SIMPLE PAST or PAST CONTINUOUS of the verbs in parenthesis.

1. We _____ (play) football when the rain _____ (start).
2. He _____ (break) the vase while he _____ (play) ball at home.
3. My mom _____ (come) in while I _____ (surf) on the net.
4. Sandra _____ (run) when she _____ (fall) down the stairs.
5. I _____ (play) golf when it _____ (begin) to rain.
6. While she _____ (read) a novel, her sister _____ (turn off) the lights.
7. They _____ (walk) along the beach when they _____ (see) the accident.
8. We _____ (study) in the library when we _____ (hear) a scary voice.
9. While she _____ (do) the ironing, her husband _____ (set) the table.
10. Ricardo and I _____ (dance) when he _____ (fall).
11. When the thieve _____ (fall) down the tree, he _____ (hide) from the police.
12. I _____ (wait) outside the hospital when I _____ (hear) the bad news.
13. She _____ (cry) when I _____ (see) her.
14. My parents _____ (sit) in the garden while we _____ (play) badminton.
15. Bob _____ (lie) in the garden when it _____ (start) to rain.
16. What _____ you _____ (do) when Daniel _____ (fall)?
17. I _____ (talk) to costumer service when the postman _____ (deliver) my package!
18. While I _____ (swim) in the river, I _____ (see) some frogs.
19. Jim _____ (send) a message when he _____ (crash) his car into a tree.
20. While I _____ (put) the baby down, the phone _____ (ring)

LIVEWORKSHEETS

ACTIVITY 2. 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.

ACTIVITY 3. Complete the text with past simple or past continuous.

Today _____ (not be) not a good day. First, 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 _____ (arrive) to the classroom everyone _____ (study) in silence. The teacher _____ (look) at me and said, 'Good afternoon, Luis. How nice of you to join us.' Everyone _____ (laugh). I _____ (be) so embarrassed.

LIVEWORKSHEETS