

Past continuous

I can use the past continuous.

- 1 Read the opening paragraph of a story.
Why does the narrator notice the tall man?



With my backpack in my hands, I stepped off the train onto the crowded platform. It was 7.30 in the evening. People were hurrying home. A mother and her two young children were sitting on a bench. The mother was talking to the boy, but he wasn't looking at her. The girl was singing quietly and playing with a toy. Around them, travellers were shouting greetings, waving goodbye, carrying heavy bags or running to catch trains. A very tall man was standing completely still near the exit. Why was he wearing summer clothes in this weather? And why was he looking straight at me?

- 2 Read the **Learn this!** box. Then find all the examples of the past continuous in the text in exercise 1.

LEARN THIS! Past continuous

- a** We often use the past continuous to set the scene.
It was snowing. Two men were walking towards the house.
- b** We use the past continuous to talk about an action that was in progress at a particular time.
At midnight, I was doing my homework.
- c** When we use the past continuous with two or more actions, we do not need to repeat the subject (*I, we, etc.*) or *was / were* if the subject is the same.
We were sitting on the sofa and eating pizza.

➔ Grammar Builder 2B page 120

- 3 Complete the paragraph below with the past continuous form of the verbs in brackets. Do not repeat the subject or *was / were* if they are not necessary.

I left the hotel early the next morning. Already, the sun
1 _____ (shine) brightly and the temperature
2 _____ (rise). In the square, café owners
3 _____ (carry) tables outside. A dog 4 _____
(lie) on the pavement nearby, but it 5 _____ (not sleep).
Two teenage girls 6 _____ (sit) on a bench
7 _____ (share) headphones. What 8 _____
(they / listen) to?

- 4 **SPEAKING** Work in pairs. Ask and answer questions about the people in the texts in exercises 1 and 3.

What were they doing?

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 the mother | 5 the tall man |
| 2 the boy | 6 the café owners |
| 3 the girl | 7 the dog |
| 4 the other travellers | 8 the teenage girls |

What was the mother doing?

She was ...

- 5 Imagine that yesterday you arrived in the centre of a new city. Write sentences in the past continuous to describe the scene. Use the words below or your own ideas.

A tourist was reading a book.

a tourist
some birds
two taxi drivers
a street vendor
a police officer
some schoolchildren
a shop owner
some workmen
some shoppers

stand / sit
argue / fight
take photos
eat / drink
talk on the phone
read a book / magazine
laugh / smile / sing
walk / run / ride a bike

- 6 Work in pairs. Swap the sentences you wrote in exercise 5. Choose three of your partner's sentences and write a question about each one using the past continuous.

A tourist was reading a book.

What book was the tourist reading?

- 7 **SPEAKING** Ask and answer the questions you wrote in exercise 6.

What book was the tourist reading?

A travel guide to the city.

- 8 Write the opening paragraph of a story. Use your ideas from exercise 5 and include the extra information from exercise 7.

- 9 **SPEAKING** Read your paragraph to the class. The class decides which is the best opening and why.

2B Past continuous

1 Complete the sentences. Use the past continuous form of the verbs in brackets. ➔ 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

- At eight o'clock yesterday evening, Josh _____ (text) his girlfriend.
- 'Why _____ they _____ (laugh) at me?'
- You _____ (not pay) attention while I _____ (speak), were you?
- Dave _____ (walk) down the street, _____ (eat) a sandwich.
- Emma _____ (watch) TV and Lisa _____ (read) a magazine.
- At midnight, Wendy _____ still _____ (do) her homework.

2 Complete the text with the past continuous form of the verbs below. ➔ 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

get make put shine sing talk

It was a beautiful morning. The sun ¹ _____ and the birds ² _____. We ³ _____ ready to go to the beach. Dad ⁴ _____ our bags in the car and Mum and Tom ⁵ _____ sandwiches in the kitchen. I ⁶ _____ to my friend on the phone.

3 Complete the dialogue with the past continuous form of the verbs in brackets. ➔ 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

- Policeman** What ¹ _____ (you / do) at 9 o'clock yesterday evening?
- Woman** I ² _____ (watch) TV in the living room.
- Policeman** What ³ _____ (you / watch)?
- Woman** Er ... I can't remember. I ⁴ _____ (not pay) attention. I was sleepy.
- Policeman** What ⁵ _____ (your husband / do) at that time?
- Woman** He ⁶ _____ (make) chicken pie in the kitchen.
- Policeman** How do you know?
- Woman** Because our dog ⁷ _____ (go crazy). He loves the smell of chicken!

4 What were you doing last Saturday at these times? Write sentences. ➔ 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1 7 a.m. | 4 6 p.m. |
| 2 10 a.m. | 5 9 p.m. |
| 3 1 p.m. | 6 11.30 p.m. |

At 7 a.m., I was having a shower.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2D Contrast: past simple and past continuous

5 Complete the sentences with the past simple or past continuous form of the verbs in brackets. ➔ 2.5, 2.6

- When Molly _____ (drop) her phone on the floor, it _____ (break).
- When my parents _____ (get) home, they _____ (find) a mouse in the kitchen.
- Martin _____ (not hear) the phone because he _____ (have) a shower.
- At 8 p.m. last night, I _____ (sit) at my desk but I _____ (not work).
- When I _____ (see) Ben and Tia, they _____ (sit) on a bench, _____ (laugh) and _____ (chat).
- It was a warm afternoon, but the sun _____ (not shine).
- While we _____ (take) my grandmother to hospital, our car _____ (break down).
- I _____ (lose) my watch while we _____ (play) volleyball in the park.

6 Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. ➔ 2.5, 2.6

- While we were having dinner, my dad arrived home.
We _____ when my dad _____.
- I was trying to sleep when the phone rang.
The _____ while I _____.
- She was climbing up some rocks when she fell.
As she _____, she _____.
- While you were shopping, I tidied your room.
You _____ when _____.
- The boat hit some rocks as it was sailing towards the shore.
The boat was _____ when it _____.

7 Complete the text with the past simple or past continuous form of the verbs in brackets. ➔ 2.5, 2.6, 2.7

It was past midnight when Helen ¹ _____ (arrive) home. She ² _____ (close) the door quietly because her parents ³ _____ (sleep) upstairs. As she ⁴ _____ (take off) her coat, she ⁵ _____ (see) a letter on the floor with her name on it. She ⁶ _____ (open) the letter and ⁷ _____ (read) it. Then she ⁸ _____ (put) it in her pocket, ⁹ _____ (pick up) her coat and ¹⁰ _____ (go) out again. It ¹¹ _____ (be) a cold night but it ¹² _____ (not rain). A few people ¹³ _____ (walk) towards the High Street, so Helen ¹⁴ _____ (cross) the road and ¹⁵ _____ (follow) them. She ¹⁶ _____ (not know) where they ¹⁷ _____ (go) – but she ¹⁸ _____ (not want) to be alone.