

## PAST CONTINUOUS

A

Study this example situation:



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

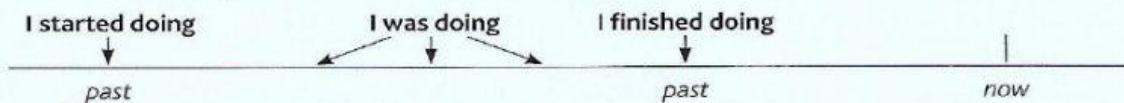
They **were playing** = they were in the middle of playing. They had not finished playing.

**Was/were -ing** is the *past continuous*:

I/he/she/it	<b>was</b>	playing
we/you/they	<b>were</b>	doing working etc.

B

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



- This time last year I **was living** in Brazil.
- What **were** you **doing** at 10 o'clock last night?
- I waved to Helen, but she **wasn't looking**.

C

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

*Past continuous* (in the middle of an action)

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

*Past simple* (complete action)

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

D

We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to say that something happened in the middle of something else:

- 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 **had** a chat.

Compare:

- 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)

E

Some verbs (for example, **know** and **want**) are not normally used in the continuous (see Unit 4A):

- 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)

# Exercises

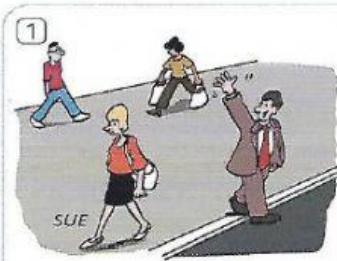
6.1 What were you doing at these times? Write sentences as in the examples. The past continuous is not always necessary (see the second example).

- 1 (at 8 o'clock yesterday evening) I was having dinner.
- 2 (at 5 o'clock last Monday) I was on a bus on my way home.
- 3 (at 10.15 yesterday morning)
- 4 (at 4.30 this morning)
- 5 (at 7.45 yesterday evening)
- 6 (half an hour ago)

6.2 Use your own ideas to complete the sentences. Use the past continuous.

- 1 Matt phoned while we were having dinner.
- 2 The doorbell rang while I .....
- 3 The car began to make a strange noise when we .....
- 4 Jessica fell asleep while she .....
- 5 The television was on, but nobody .....

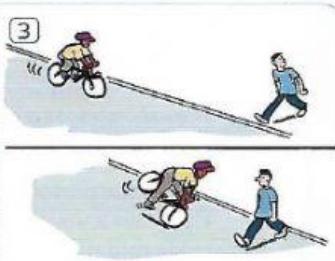
6.3 Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.



I saw (see) Sue in town yesterday, but she (not / see) me. She (look) the other way.



I (meet) Tom and Jane at the airport a few weeks ago. They (go) to Paris and I (go) to Rome. We (have) a chat while we (wait) for our flights.



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 (not / hit) him.

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

- 1 Jenny was waiting (wait) for me when I arrived. (arrive).
- 2 'What (you / do) at this time yesterday?' 'I was asleep.'
- 3 ' (you / go) out last night?' 'No, I was too tired.'
- 4 How fast (happen) (you / drive) when the accident (happen)?
- 5 Sam (take) a picture of me while I (not / look).
- 6 We were in a very difficult position. We (not / know) what to do.
- 7 I haven't seen Alan for ages. When I last (see) him, he (try) to find a job.
- 8 I (walk) along the street when suddenly I (hear) footsteps behind me. Somebody (start) to run. (follow) me. I was scared and I (start) to run.
- 9 When I was young, I (want) to be a pilot.
- 10 Last night I (drop) a plate when I (do) the washing-up. Fortunately it (not / break).