

6.4 Past Continuous and Past Simple

We use the Past Continuous to say something was in progress at a precise moment in the past.

+	I/He/She/It You/We/They		was watching TV. were sleeping at 9 p.m.
	I/He/She/It You/We/They		wasn't (was not) watching TV. weren't (were not) sleeping at 9 p.m.
?	Was	I/he/ she/it	watching TV? Yes, I/he/she/it was. No, I/he/she/it wasn't.
	Were	you/ we/ they	sleeping at 9 p.m.? Yes, you/we/they were. No, you/we/they weren't.
	Where What	was were	he you going? doing?

Time expressions

at three o'clock this morning
at 5.15 last Tuesday
forty minutes ago

Past Continuous and Past Simple

We often use the Past Continuous with the Past Simple. We use the Past Simple for a short/complete action (e.g. *I broke my leg*) and the Past Continuous for a longer activity in progress at the same time (e.g. *I was playing football*). Before the Past Continuous we use **while** or **when**.

While/When I was playing football, I broke my leg.
I broke my leg **while/when** I was playing football.

Before the Past Simple we normally use **when**.

What **were** you **doing** **when** the accident **happened**?
When the accident **happened**, what **were** you **doing**?

1 Complete the sentences with the Past Continuous form of the verbs in brackets.

- The phone rang while they **were sleeping** (sleep).
- Anna _____ (not dance) at one o'clock in the morning.
- Where _____ (Sue/go) when she fell?
- We _____ (play) football when it began to rain.
- I _____ (not listen) when the doctor told me his name.
- What _____ (you/do) when you cut your finger?

2 Complete the story with the Past Simple or Past Continuous form of the verbs in brackets. Then compare with a partner.

Last Sunday at four o'clock I ¹**was riding** (ride) my bike home. It ² _____ (rain) a lot so I ³ _____ (put) up my umbrella. While I ⁴ _____ (go) past the station, I ⁵ _____ (see) Jennifer Lawrence! She ⁶ _____ (get) into a taxi. I ⁷ _____ (not look) where I ⁸ _____ (go) so I ⁹ _____ (ride) my bike into the back of a car! I ¹⁰ _____ (fall) and ¹¹ _____ (hit) my head. I was lucky I ¹² _____ (not break) my neck.