

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 Were	I/he/she/it you/we/they	watching TV? sleeping at 9 p.m.?	Yes, I/he/she/it was. Yes, you/we/they were. No, I/he/she/it wasn't. 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.

- 1 The phone rang while they **were sleeping** (sleep).
- 2 Anna **..... (not dance)** at one o'clock in the morning.
- 3 Where **..... (Sue/go)** when she fell?
- 4 We **..... (play)** football when it began to rain.
- 5 I **..... (not listen)** when the doctor told me his name.
- 6 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.