8

Past continuous

Talking about two events in the past

was/were + -ing

In this unit you learn about using the past continuous to talk about the past.



What was everybody doing when the clock struck midnight?

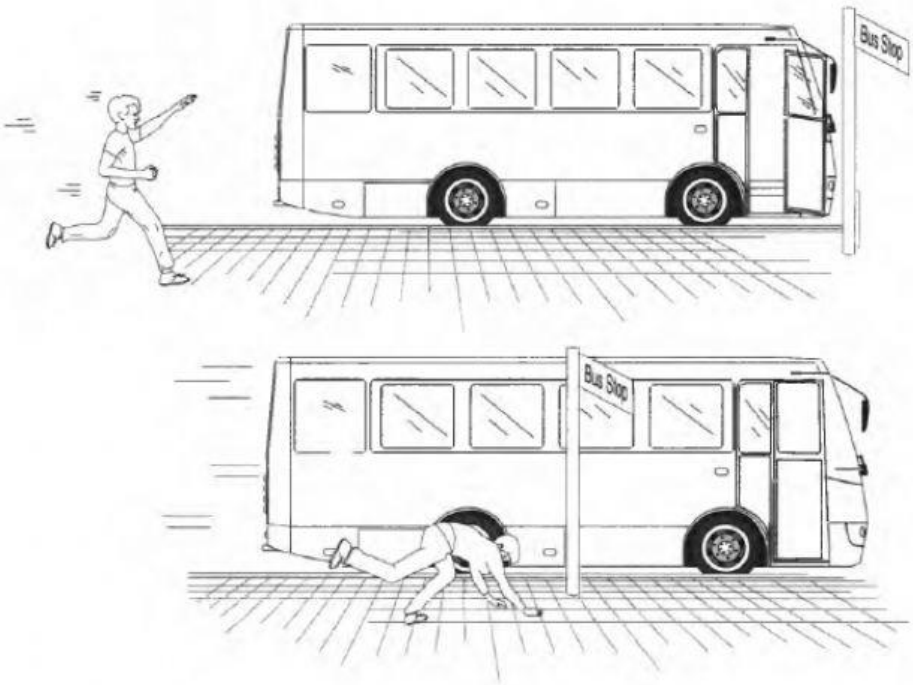
Anna **was laughing** at something and her sister, Helen, **was sleeping** in a chair. Helen's husband **was drinking** a glass of lemonade and his brother **was dancing** with his wife. Helen's two children **were watching** a film on TV.

You use the past continuous to describe continuous actions in the past.

I/he/she	was/wasn't	sleeping dancing watching TV reading working	all night.
you/we/they	were/weren't		
Was	I/he/she		all night?
Were	you/we/they		

LIVEWORKSHEETS

You can use the past continuous with the past simple to compare two actions. You use the past continuous when you describe the longer action.



*William **was running** to catch a bus **when he fell over**.*

You can compare the two actions using **when**, **while** and **as**.

*I was swimming in the sea **when** it started raining.*
*I texted my friend **while** I was waiting for the bus.*
***As** I was leaving home, the phone rang.*

You can put the two parts of these sentences in a different order:

***When** it started raining I was swimming in the sea.*

> ***Remember!***
>
> You use **when** before the past simple and **while** or **as** before the past continuous.

Exercise 1

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets to complete each sentence.

1 Gemma met her husband while they were both _____ (travel) in India.
2 Where were you going when I _____ (see) you yesterday?
3 I was living abroad when the accident _____ (happen).
4 As he was _____ (wait) for Anna, he looked around the room.
5 While I was walking to the park, I suddenly _____ (have) a great idea.
6 As Paula was _____ (get) on the train, she fell and hurt her knee.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exercise 2

Choose the correct word or words.

1 Who **were you talking to / did you talk to** when I saw you in the café yesterday?
2 While Suzi was cleaning the house, she **was finding / found** a ring under the sofa.
3 As we were eating our meal, we **were hearing / heard** a loud noise in the next room.
4 She often **listened / was listening** to music while she was working.
5 As we were **said / saying** goodbye, she gave me a present.
6 What **did you do / were you doing** while your friends were playing tennis?

Exercise 3

Complete the sentences by writing one word in each gap.

getting | dropped | met | having | working | visiting

1 While I was _____ Tom, I helped him with his computer.
2 Tara learned to speak Spanish while she was _____ in Madrid.
3 As I was _____ dressed, I felt a sudden pain in my arm.
4 Greta and Martin were _____ an argument when I arrived.
5 When I _____ John, he was studying at Liverpool University.
6 As Martha was giving me the glass, she _____ it and it broke.

Exercise 4

Match the sentence halves.

1 What were they doing	**a** while I was having a shower.
2 While I was waiting for my dad,	**b** was having my dinner.
3 As we were leaving, we noticed	**c** your parents were on holiday?
4 When Robert arrived, I	**d** I read a magazine.
5 My friend Maria called	**e** when the lights went out?
6 What did you do while	**f** some men outside the house.

Exercise 5

Which sentences are correct?

1 As I was checking my email, Peter came into the office. ❑
2 Someone was stealing Maria's passport while she slept. ❑
3 I watched a movie when Ben called to tell me the news. ❑
4 While Pat was shopping, I had a cup of coffee in a café. ❑
5 As we were climbing up the hill, we were noticing several black clouds in the sky. ❑
6 I was driving to my mother's house when I saw a horse in the road. ❑

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exercise 6

Choose the correct word.

The lost handbag

As I [1]**was come / am coming / was coming** home from work yesterday, I [2]**was seeing / saw / see** something on the pavement. It was a woman's handbag. I picked it up and looked in it. I found a card with a phone number. I called the number and a woman answered. 'I [3]**was cycling / to cycle / cycled** to work when I [4]**drop / was dropping / dropped** it,' she explained, 'but I only noticed a minute ago. I was very worried!'

She said she could come straight away. It was a sunny day, so while I [5]**was waiting / was wait / wait** for her, I [6]**was sitting / am sitting / sat** on a bench and read the newspaper.

LIVEWORKSHEETS