

I'll never forget the first time I met my wife. I was at a party with friends. While everyone was laughing and talking, a beautiful and mysterious woman arrived.

When she walked into the room, everyone immediately stopped talking and looked at her. No one knew who she was. And I remember that she was wearing an amazing red dress.

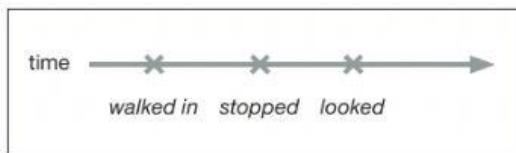
Presentation

Use the past simple and the past continuous to talk about situations and events in the past.

Past simple

Use the past simple for:

- A short completed action: *She arrived at the party.*
- A sequence of actions: *She walked into the room. Everyone stopped talking and looked at her.*



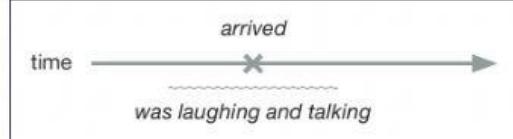
Past continuous

Use the past continuous for:

- An unfinished or continuing activity: *Everyone was laughing and talking.*
- A background situation: *She was wearing an amazing red dress.*

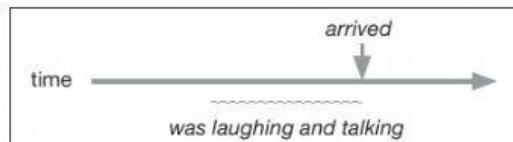
We often use the past continuous with the past simple to explain that two actions happened at the same time:

While everyone was laughing and talking, a beautiful woman arrived.



The past simple action may interrupt the longer past continuous action:

While everyone was laughing and talking, a beautiful woman arrived. Everyone immediately stopped talking.



when and while

We often use *when* and *while* in sentences with the past simple and the past continuous. They can go at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence:

When I arrived, everyone was laughing and talking.
Everyone was laughing and talking when I arrived.

TIP You can use *while* or *when* with the past continuous, but we don't normally use *while* with the past simple.

Exercises**1 Choose the correct option.**

1 He ¹rescuing / ~~was rescuing~~ his cat from a tree when the accident ²happened / was happening.
He ³climbing / was climbing the tree when he ⁴fell / was falling and ⁵broke / was breaking his leg.

2 When we ⁶arrived / were arriving at the party, some of the guests ⁷got / were getting ready to leave.
The host ⁸came / was coming over to talk to us and we ⁹apologized / were apologizing for being late.

3 While I ¹⁰ate / was eating dinner last night I ¹¹heard / was hearing a loud noise. I ¹²went / was going over to the window and looked outside. It was dark, but someone ¹³moved / was moving across the garden towards the house. Immediately, I ¹⁴called / was calling the police.

2 Complete the questions for the answers using the past simple or the past continuous.

1 What you when your team scored? (do)
We celebrated!

2 Who you to on the phone? (talk)
It was my mother.

3 it when you went out earlier? (rain)
Yes, but it stopped at midday.

4 Where you at the weekend? (go)
To London to see some friends.

5 Where you when the car broke down? (drive)
To the garage!

6 Why you school today? (miss)
I didn't feel well.

3 Complete the dialogue using the past simple or the past continuous.

A: ¹ Did you ² (go) to Hugh's party last night?
B: No, I didn't. In fact I ² (leave) my house to go to it when the phone rang.
My brother had a problem so I ³ (spend) the evening at his house.
Why? What ⁴ (happen)?

A: Well, at around midnight, while everyone ⁵ (dance) and the band ⁶ (play), some thieves ⁷ (break) into the house.

B: No! Really?

A: Yes! Hugh ⁸ (not find out) till a few hours later.

B: What ⁹ they (take)?

A: Some money and jewellery from the upstairs.