# 12 Past Continuous vs Past Simple

## Past Continuous vs Past Simple

**We use the past continuous:**

- **for an action which was in progress at a stated time in the past.**

  The girls **were playing** volleyball at five o'clock in the afternoon.
  (When did they start? We don't know.)

- **for two or more actions happening at the same time in the past.**

  The children **were studying** while their mother **was cooking**.

- **for an action which was in progress when another action interrupted it. The action that interrupted it is in the past simple.**

  Mary **was cooking** when he **burnt** her hand.

**We use the past simple:**

- **for an action that took place at a specific time in the past.**

  Simon **went** to camp **last month**.
  (When did he go to camp? Last month.)

- **actions which happened immediately one after the other in the past.**

  First she **made** the pizza, then she **put** it in the oven.

**Time expressions used with the past continuous:**

while, when, as, all day / night / morning, all day yesterday, etc.

**Time expressions used with the past simple:**

ago, yesterday, last month / week / year, in 2005, then, etc.

## 5 Underline the correct item.

1 I **watched** / **was watching** a DVD when my cat **jumped** / **was jumping** on me.
2 She **was buying** / **bought** a new dress last month.
3 Greg **was sleeping** / **slept** while Joanne **listened** / **was listening** to her MP3 player.
4 Mum **cooked** / **was cooking** dinner when someone **knocked** / **was knocking** on the door.
5 Sue **was watering** / **watered** the flowers when it **started** / **start** to rain.
6 They **were walking** / **walked** to school last Monday because there was no bus.
7 **I ate** / **was eating** a sandwich while my parents **drank** / **were drinking** coffee.

## 6 Put the verbs in brackets into the *past continuous* or the *past simple*.

1 Jack ..*was playing*.. **(play)** a video game when his brother, Tom, ....*entered*.... **(enter)** the room.
2 I ..... **(study)** for my English test when my mother ..... **(come)** home from work.
3 I ..... **(read)** a book when my sister ..... **(leave)** for the cinema.
4 Emma ..... **(wash)** the dishes when the telephone ..... **(ring)**.
5 I ..... **(write)** an email when the lights ..... **(go)** out.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

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12

**7** **Put the verbs in brackets into the *past simple* or the *past continuous*.**

1 A: What 1) ..were the children doing.. **(the children/do)** when you 2) .....returned..... **(return)** home last night?
B: Kate 3) ..... **(watch)** a DVD and Andrew 4) ..... **(do)** his homework.

2 A: How 1) ..... **(Anne/break)** her leg?
B: She 2) ..... **(ride)** her horse when she 3) ..... **(fall)** and 4) ..... **(land)** on her leg.
A: 5) ..... **(she/go)** to hospital?
B: Yes, she did.

3 A: When 1) ..... **(you/see)** Peter?
B: While I 2) ..... **(do)** my shopping at the supermarket.

4 A: I 1) ..... **(call)** you last night but you 2) ..... **(not/answer)**. Where were you?
B: I 3) ..... **(jog)** in the park.

5 A: 1) ..... **(you/hear)** what happened to George?
B: No! Is he OK?
A: Well, he 2) ..... **(ride)** his bike to school when a cat 3) ..... **(jump)** out in front of him. He 4) ..... **(try)** to stop but he 5) ..... **(fall)** against a wall. Luckily, he 6) ..... **(not/be)** hurt.

**8** **Read the letter and write the missing words. Write one word on each line.**

Dear Georgia,

I'm writing to you from my hotel room 1) .....in..... Berlin. You can't imagine what happened to me yesterday! I was walking in Mitte at around noon 2) ..... it started raining. 3) ..... I was running back to the hotel, I saw a famous actor who was eating in a restaurant. I went in and 4) ..... hello and he gave me two tickets to see his new film. Isn't that great?

That's all for now. See you 5) ..... I get back!

Love,
Rachel



LIVEWORKSHEETS

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## Speaking Activity

**What did Angelica and Susan do yesterday? Look at the pictures. Take roles and tell the story. Use the *past continuous* or the *past simple*.**

- be / beautiful / Sunday / morning
- Angelica and Susan / decide / to take / dog / for walk / in park
- Angelica / sit / bench / read book / while / Susan / take / the dog / walk
- half an hour / Susan / come back / alone
- they / look / for dog / everywhere / but / not find / him
- when / get / dark / they / decide / return home
- when / they / arrive / home / dog / lie in front of the door
- look at each other / laugh
















Student A: It was a beautiful Sunday morning.
Student B: Angelica and Susan decided to take their dog for a walk in the park.



## Writing Activity

**Imagine you are either Angelica or Susan. Write in your diary about what happened to you yesterday.**

Dear Diary,

You can't imagine what happened to us yesterday! Susan and I decided to take our dog for a walk in the park. I .....

.....

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LIVEWORKSHEETS