

2.2 Past Continuous and Past Simple

We use the Past Continuous:

- to describe a longer background scene in a story, during which other main events (described in the Past Simple) took place:

At 7 p.m. Doug **was working** on his computer. He **was sitting** at his desk and **downloading** some photos when the lights **went out**.

- to talk about an action that was in progress when another action took place (for the shorter action, which happened while the longer one was in progress, we use the Past Simple):

While Meg **was texting** a message to her friend, she **dropped** her phone.

- to talk about actions in progress at the same time:

While Ann **was doing** some experiments, Terry **was taking** some measurements.

Affirmative		Negative		
I/He/ She/It	was	I/He/ She/It	wasn't (was not)	watching TV.
You/ We/ They	were	You/ We/ They	weren't (were not)	watching TV.
Yes/No questions		Short answers		
Was	I/he/ she/it	Yes, I/he/she/it was . No, I/he/she/it wasn't .		
Were	you/ we/ they	Yes, you/we/they were . No, you/we/they weren't .		
Wh- questions		Subject questions		
What	was	I/he/ she/it	watching?	Who was watching TV?
	were	you/ we/ they		

1 Choose the correct option.

- I **lay** / **was lying** on the beach when suddenly it started / **was starting** raining.
- I **read** / **was reading** a book when you **called** me / **were calling** me at 4 o'clock yesterday.
- The first time I **was seeing** / **saw** my boyfriend, he **danced** / **was dancing** at a party.
- We **were having** / **had** lunch when the door opened.
- It **was** a sunny day. I **left** / **was leaving** home. Suddenly the postman **was knocking** / **knocked** on the door.
- When my mum **drove** / **was driving** to work yesterday, she **saw** / **was seeing** her old friend from school.
- Molly **was breaking** / **broke** her leg when she **climbed** / **was climbing** a tree.
- Was Ben **studying** / **Did Ben study** yesterday at 8 p.m.?

2 Write questions for the following answers.

- Sally was doing her homework when the phone rang.
(What) _____ ?
- Clare was wearing a fantastic dress at the party.
(What) _____ ?
- We played tennis from five to eight.
(How long) _____ ?
- At 7:30 yesterday morning, Sophie was driving to the airport.
(Where) _____ ?
- They were having dinner at seven.
(When) _____ ?
- We saw Mark at the café.
(Who) _____ ?
- Alice was crying during the film because it was a drama.
(Why) _____ ?
- Chris bought a sandwich for lunch.
(What) _____ ?

3 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in brackets. Use the Past Simple or the Past Continuous.

- Mum _____ (work) on her laptop while dad _____ (listen) to music on his new MP3 player.
- Margaret _____ (talk) on her smartphone when she _____ (start) crying.
- Adam _____ (not/watch) the film so I _____ (change) TV channels.
- Tony _____ (not/take) any photos with his phone at the party because he _____ (send) text messages to Jessica all the time.
- I _____ (drop) my memory stick when I _____ (run) for the tram.
- Alan and I _____ (play) on the games console when my dad _____ (come) home.

4 Write sentences from the prompts.

- I / run / in the park / when / Joanna / telephone / me.

- while / Gareth / update / social media profile / his wife / do / yoga.

- what / you / eat / when / I / get / back home?

- you / sleep / when / the teacher / explain / the task to us?

- Jo / use / computer / when / it / crash.

- I / cook / dinner / then / visit / favourite website.

- while / Jane / study / Dan / play / video games.

- Jim / get up / and then / get ready / for school.
