

Simple Past vs. Past Continuous for Interrupted Actions in the Past

1 Complete the sentences with the correct tense: simple past or past continuous. Use the verbs in parentheses.

a. The ball	(hit) me while I	(watch) a bird.
b. Jenny	(sail) when she	(see) some dolphins.
c. He	(chase) the ball when he	(fall) over.
d. When I	(look) out of the window, it	(snow).
e. The electricity	(go) off while we	(watch) TV.

2 Complete each pair of sentences (A, B, and C). Use the past continuous tense for the longer activity and the simple past tense for the shorter one. Then join the ideas to form one sentence with while (sentence #1) and one sentence with when (sentence #2)

Pair A { Alex and Sue (watch) a film on TV.
Their friends (arrive).

Sentence #1 (use while):

Sentence #2 (use when):

Pair B { Marco (have) breakfast.
He (have) a great idea.

Sentence #1 (use while):

Sentence #2 (use when):

Pair C { Two cars (collide).
I (walk) to school.

Sentence #1 (use while):

Sentence #2 (use when):