

# THE GRAMMAR GAMESHOW

**Will:** Hello and welcome to the Grammar Gameshow! I'm your host, Will! – but I'll change for person and time! And of course, let's not forget Leslie, our all-knowing voice in the sky.

**Leslie:** Welcome, everyone!

**Will:** Tonight we're going to be asking three questions about...

**Leslie:** The \_\_\_\_\_ tense!

**Will:** OK! Now, let's meet our contestants!

**Helen:** Hi everyone. I'm Helen!

**Will:** Contestant number 2?

**Greg:** Hi, everyone. I'm Greg!

**Will:** Welcome back Helen! Ok. Let's get going, and don't forget you can play along at home too. Our first round is a battle round. Contestants ask each other questions about the past continuous until one of them makes a mistake. Helen do you want to start?

**Helen:** Yes, please!

**Will:** That's a shame! Greg, you can go first...

**Greg:** Oh! Right! What is the formula for the past continuous?

**Helen:** \_\_\_\_\_

Ha ha! What do we use the past continuous for?

**Greg:** Actions which \_\_\_\_\_

Ha ha - yes! Give me an example.

**Helen:** I was eating dinner at 6pm last night. Ha ha! Do we use the past continuous with \_\_\_\_\_?

**Greg:** No, not usually. Ha ha – yes! Do we usually use the past continuous with repeated actions?

**Helen:** Yes!

**Will:** Oh! That was vicious! Well played, but Helen, you made a mistake there. Leslie?

**Leslie:** Mostly right! The past continuous is used to describe actions that were in progress at a past time. It is constructed with 'was' or 'were' and 'verbING' – and, being continuous, it does not usually use state verbs. However, it does not usually describe repeated actions or habits either. Sorry Helen, that's the past simple.

**Will:** Sorry Helen. 20 points to Greg. Let's move on to our next round. Which one of these sentences is incorrect and why?

- a) I was walking when I tripped and fell.
- b) I was walking while I tripped and fell.
- c) When I was walking, I tripped and fell.
- d) While I was walking, I tripped and fell.

**Greg:** Trick question! They are all correct.

**Helen:** No, no. B is wrong – We don't use \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_

Ha ha!

**Will:** Wow. You two are really getting into it! Leslie?

**Leslie:** We often use the past continuous and past simple together to describe a longer action that is interrupted by a short one. These actions are connected with time words like

'\_\_\_\_\_ ' and '\_\_\_\_\_ '. However, we do not usually use 'while' in front of the short action. Well done Helen.

**Will:** Well done Helen. 20 points for you! This is exciting. It's neck and neck! It's time for our final question. True or false: The past continuous can make you sound more polite.

**Helen:** \_\_\_\_\_!

**Will:** It is true! Can you explain how?

**Helen:** No?

**Will:** Greg?

**Greg:** Using the past continuous makes things more polite because it seems \_\_\_\_\_ and so \_\_\_\_\_.

**Will:** Leslie?

**Leslie:** Yep. Using the past continuous can make sentences seem more polite by distancing them from the present – this makes them sound \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

More gentle. For example – 'I was hoping you could lend me money' is more polite than 'I hope you can lend me money'.

**Will:** Well, this is tricky. Helen you said it was true and Greg you explained it. Who do I give the points to?

**Greg:** You should give it to me!

**Helen:** No, I was the one who answered the question.

**Greg:** No you didn't. I got it right. You should give it to me!

**Helen:** Oh rubbish!

**Will:** I know! Wasn't that easier? And that brings us to the end of today's Grammar Gameshow. And the winner is... Me! Well done! Thank you! What have I won?

**Leslie:** Cash in mixed currency!

**Will:** It looks like we'll need two more contestants. Thanks for joining us. Say goodbye Leslie.

**Leslie:** Goodbye, Leslie!

**Will:** See you next time.

### QUIZ:

WHICH OF THESE IS AN INCORRECT USE OF THE PAST CONTINUOUS?

- A By the time he arrived, I was cooking dinner.
- B At 6 o'clock on Sunday? I was watching a movie.
- C I was getting up at 6am every day to go to school.

WHICH ONE OF THESE SENTENCES COMBINING THE PAST CONTINUOUS AND THE PAST SIMPLE IS INCORRECT?

- A While we were eating, the doorbell rang.
- B While I was drinking my tea, I saw a bird fly past the window.
- C While I opened the door, I was talking to my brother.

TRUE OR FALSE: YOU CAN NEVER USE A STATE VERB WITH THE PAST CONTINUOUS.

- A True: we can NEVER use a state verb with the past continuous
- B False: We can use a state verb if we really mean it
- C False: We can use a state verb when we use the past continuous to be polite