

Past Simple or Past Continuous

We often use the **past continuous** and the **past simple** in the same sentence. The action in the past simple is short and usually unexpected. It interrupts the "longer" action which is usually in a past continuous form.

For example:

What **were** you **doing** when the plane **landed**?

I **was looking** in my bag for my passport when I **heard** a shout.

We **jumped** into a car that **was waiting** for the bus stop.

I **was watching** TV while my wife **was sleeping**.

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| | Rule | Examples |
|--------------|--|--|
| When | When is followed by a sentence in past simple . | When I took the photo, the kids were playing . The kids were playing when I took the photo. |
| While | While is followed by a sentence in past continuous . | While I was having dinner, my father arrived . My father arrived while I was having dinner. |
| | While is also used when two actions are happening simultaneously. | While I was watching TV my mother was cooking . I was watching TV while my mother was cooking . |

Choose Past Simple or Past Continuous 1

Make the past simple or past continuous

1) I (sit) in a cafe when you (call) .

[.] [.]

2) When you (arrive) at the party, who

(be) there?

[.] [.]

3) Susie (watch) a film when she

(hear) the noise.

[.] [.]

4) Yesterday I (go) to the library, next I

(have) a swim, later I (meet) Julie

for coffee.

[.] [.] [.]

5) We (play) tennis when John

(hurt) his ankle.

6) What (they/do) at 10pm last night - it was really noisy?

[.]

7) He (take) a shower when the telephone

(ring).

[.][.]

8) He (be) in the shower when the telephone

(ring).

[.][.]

9) When I (walk) into the room, everyone

(work).

[.][.]

10) It (be) a day last September. The sun

(shine) and the birds (sing) . I

(walk) along the street when I

(meet) an old friend.

11) He (live) in Russia when the Revolution
 (start).

[.][.]

12) When her train (get) to the station, we
 (wait) on the platform.

[.][.]

13) He (be) so annoying! He
(always leave) his things everywhere.

[.][.]

14) On holiday we (visit) Rome,
(see) the Vatican, and (spend) a few days at the beach.

[.][.][.]

15) Why (stand) on a chair when I
(come) into the room?

16) They (live) in Germany when they
 (be) young.

[.][.]

17) At 7pm yesterday, we (listen) to music.

[.]

18) When I (leave) the house, it
(snow).

[.][.]

19) He (work) in a bank when he
(meet) his wife.

[.][.]

20) What (you/do) when I (call) you
last night?