

Storytelling Grammar Guide: Past Simple vs. Past Continuous

What Are These Tenses?

The **past simple** and **past continuous** are both used to talk about things that happened in the past, but they have different jobs in storytelling.

- **Past Simple:** Describes _____ actions that happened and finished in the past
- **Past Continuous:** Describes _____ actions that were happening at a specific time in the past

Past Simple Tense

When to Use Past Simple

Use past simple for actions that:

1. Started and _____ in the past
2. Happened at a _____ time
3. Are the main _____ in your story

How to Form Past Simple

Regular verbs: Add _____ to the base verb

- walk → walked
- play → _____
- study → studied

Irregular verbs: These change completely and must be _____

- go → went
- eat → _____
- see → saw

Past Simple Examples

- I **walked** to school yesterday. (completed action)

- She **finished** her homework at 8 PM. (_____ time)
- They **visited** the museum last week. (finished action)

Past Continuous Tense

When to Use Past Continuous

Use past continuous for actions that:

1. Were _____ at a specific time in the past
2. Provide _____ information in a story
3. Were interrupted by another _____

How to Form Past Continuous

Formula: was/were + verb + _____

- I/he/she/it + _____ + verb-ing
- you/we/they + _____ + verb-ing

Past Continuous Examples

- I **was walking** to school when it started raining. (ongoing action)
- She **was studying** at 8 PM last night. (action in _____)
- They **were watching** TV when the phone rang. (_____ action)

Using Both Tenses Together in Stories

When telling stories, we often use _____ tenses together:

Pattern 1: Background + Main Action

Past continuous sets the scene, **past simple** tells what _____

- I **was reading** a book when the doorbell _____.
- While she **was cooking**, the phone _____.
- They **were playing** soccer when it _____ to rain.

Pattern 2: Two Actions at the Same Time

Use _____ when two actions happened at the same time

- While I **was studying**, my brother **was** _____ video games.
- She **was listening** to music while she **was** _____.

Practice Sentences

Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the verb:

1. Yesterday, I _____ (walk) to the store and _____ (buy) some milk.
2. While I _____ (watch) TV, my mom _____ (call) me for dinner.
3. She _____ (study) when her friends _____ (arrive).
4. Last night, we _____ (eat) pizza and _____ (watch) a movie.
5. I _____ (sleep) when the alarm clock _____ (ring).

Memory Tips

Past Simple = _____ actions (like taking a photograph)

Past Continuous = _____ actions (like watching a movie)

Think of past continuous as the "_____ scene" and past simple as the "main _____" in your story.