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.

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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

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