

PAST SIMPLE AND PAST CONTINUOUS

Past simple

Form:

The form of the Past Simple is the same in all persons.

Positive:

I/You/He/She/It/We/They **went/moved** to London in 2001.

Negative:

We use *didn't* + infinitive (without *to*) in all persons.

I/You/He/She/It/We/They **didn't go/move** to London in 2001.

Question:

We use *did* + infinitive (without *to*) in all persons.

When **did** I/you/he/she/it/we/they **go/move** to London?

Use:

We use the Past Simple to talk about:

1 finished events in the past when we know when they happened.

*I **bought** some nice things at the market last weekend.*

2 past habits or states. A time expression is usually necessary.

*I **always got up** at six in those days. (habit)*

*I **lived** in Australia for several years. (state)*

Common time expressions with the Past Simple:

- **last night/Saturday/week/month/year;**
- **yesterday;** *yesterday morning/afternoon/evening;*
- **in the twentieth century/1927;**
- **ten years/two weeks/a month ago.**

Past continuous

Form:

Positive:

Subject + *to be* + *verb-ing*

I/He/She/It **was playing** tennis at 5:00.

We/You/They **were playing** tennis at 5:00.

Negative:

Subject + *not to be* + *verb-ing*

I/He/She/It **was not playing** tennis at 5:00.

We/You/They **were not playing** tennis at 5:00.

Question:

to be + subject + *verb-ing*

Were you **playing** tennis at 5:00?

Was he **playing** tennis at 5:00?

Yes, we **were**. No, we **weren't**.

Yes, he **was**. No, he **wasn't**.

Use:

We use the Past Continuous to talk about:

1 activities that continued for some time in the past, especially to show a longer activity that was interrupted by a shorter one.

*I **was making** dinner when the phone **rang**.*

2 activities that form the background, especially to set a scene.

*We **were walking** along the beach chatting to one another. Suddenly, we **heard** a call for help.*

3 activities happening at a certain time in the past.

*What **were** you **doing** at 10 o'clock last night?*

4 two activities happening at the same time in the past.

*While I **was eating** dinner, my parents **were watching** TV.*

Practice

1 Choose the most suitable tense.

- 1 While Diana **watched/was watching** her favourite TV programme, there was a power-cut.
- 2 Who **was driving/drove** the car at the time of the accident?
- 3 What exactly **were** you **doing/did** you **do** when I came into your office yesterday?
- 4 I **was living/lived** in Canada for two years.
- 5 We **were** always **eating/we always ate** at seven in those days.

2 Put each verb in brackets into either the Past Simple or the Past Continuous.

- 1 Andrew(arrive) when I was getting ready to go out.
- 2 I (get) up early this morning. I(wash),(dress) and then I (have) breakfast.
- 3 Margaret (not/go) to work yesterday. She was ill.
- 4 My brother (break) his leg while he(ski) last week.
- 5 When (get married/your parents)?
- 6 I(phone) you last night but you(not answer).
What..... (you do)?
- 7 We (not go) out yesterday because it.....
(rain).
- 8 (you eat) spaghetti every day when you lived in Italy?
- 9 Although it rained a lot, I (enjoy) my holiday last year.
- 10 What (you/do) yesterday? – I
..... (go) to the cinema.
- 11 What..... (you/do) at 9:30 yesterday? – I
..... (watch) a film on TV.
- 12 They (fly) to America two years ago.
- 13 I wasn't hungry last night. I (not/eat) anything.
- 14 He first (meet) his wife when he
(study) in Berlin.