

## THE PAST CONTINUOUS TENSE

is formed by **WAS/WERE** plus **-ING** form of the verb (was/were playing, was/were doing), etc.

The past continuous tense in English is used to talk about **the events/actions that continued/were in progress for some time in the past.**

*She **was doing** her homework from six to eight last night.*

*He **was teaching** English for ten years. Note: He is not teaching English anymore these days!*

*They **were driving** on D1 when they saw a truck in flames.*

We also use past continuous when:

a) **Two actions were happening at the same time** in the past:

*The students **were doing** a test **and/while** the teacher **was reading** a magazine.*

*She **was watching** TV **and/while** her husband **was making** breakfast.*

b) An **action in progress was interrupted by another one** in the past:

*We **were sleeping** when the phone rang.*

*She **was shopping** when she noticed a shoplifter.*

c) We need to set a **background to a story** in the past:

*It **was getting** dark but the missing child still had to be found.*

*She **knew she was not going** the right way. Nothing seemed familiar but she kept walking. She was becoming very frightened ...*

We use **WASN'T/WEREN'T** (was not/were not) plus **-ING** form of the verb to make **negative sentences** in the past continuous:

*She **wasn't thinking** about the school (while she was on holiday).*

*The children **weren't eating**. They were awaiting Father Christmas.*

*The scouts **were not sleeping** that night. They were so excited!*

*The other day, I **was not feeling** well. My head was splitting.*

**Questions** with the past continuous tense **intend to find out what was going on at a particular time** in the past:

*What **was the teacher doing** when the accident happened?*

*What **were you doing** at seven yesterday evening?*

*What **were the men doing** at the office at seven in the evening?*

*Who **was sitting** in that chair when you entered the room?*



**1. Fill in the correct form of the past continuous.**

- a) The children (eat) ..... dinner when the mother arrived.
- b) The soldiers (march) ..... when it started to rain.
- c) He (laugh) ..... through the movie.
- d) The dog (run) ..... while he (ride) ..... his bike.
- e) Yesterday, at six, I (prepare) ..... dinner.
- f) She (study) ..... English from 8 to 12 yesterday.
- g) When we arrived, our dog (bark) ..... and (wag) ..... its tail.
- h) I opened the door. Two technicians (try) ..... to fix my computer.
- i) A: We (call) ..... you last night after dinner, but you were not in. Where were you?  
B: I (work) ..... out in the fitness centre.

**2. Put the verbs into the correct tense — past simple or past continuous.**

- a) Ben (come) ..... home, (switch) ..... on the computer, and (check) ..... his emails.
- b) Nobody (listen) ..... when the teacher (try) ..... to explain the tenses.
- c) While we (do) ..... a sightseeing tour, our parents (sip) ..... mulled wine at a stand.
- d) She (crash) ..... the car when she (drive) ..... home.
- e) He (wake) ..... up and (look) ..... at his wife.
- f) A: What (you, do) ..... when the accident happened? B: Well, I (change) ..... a light bulb.
- g) Bob (arrive) ..... at her place at 9, but she (not/be) ..... in. She (study) ..... at the library.
- h) When I (walk) ..... into the office, the secretary (talk) ..... on the phone with some students.
- i) I (get) ..... up early. When I (open) ..... the door, the snow (fall) ..... heavily.
- j) The snow (fall) ..... heavily when I (drive) ..... on a slippery road back home.
- k) While we (clean) ..... the house, we (break) ..... some glasses.
- l) She (miss) ..... the tram because she (have) ..... a chat with some friends.