

PAST SIMPLE AND PAST CONTINUOUS

A) 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 1927/the twentieth century;**
- **ten years/two weeks/a month ago.**

B) 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 There was a power-cut, when Diana **watched/was watching** her favourite TV programme.
- 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 _____ (have) breakfast, _____ (dress) and then I quickly _____ (leave) for work.
- 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).
- 7 We _____ (not go) out yesterday because it _____ (rain).
- 8 _____ (you eat) pasta 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.
- 15 When I got home I was really tired, so I _____ (have) a shower and _____ (go) to bed.
- 16 The driver _____ (lose) control of his car because he _____ (talk) on his mobile.