Past Continuous

Grammar practice · B1 · Answers on the last page.

THE RULE

Past continuous: was / were + verb-ing — an action in progress in the past.
At 7 o'clock, I was having dinner.

Often with the past simple: a longer action (continuous) interrupted by a shorter one (simple).
I was sleeping when the alarm went off.
when + past simple · while + past continuous.

Two actions at the same time: *He was reading while she was cooking.*
Note: state verbs (know, like, want) are not used in the continuous.

1 Complete with the Past Continuous (was / were + -ing).

1 At 9 pm last night, I _____ (watch) a film.

2 They _____ (play) football at five o'clock.

3 She _____ (not listen) to me.

4 What _____ you _____ (do) at midnight?

5 We _____ (wait) for the bus for ages.

6 The sun _____ (shine) and the birds _____ (sing).

2 Past Continuous or Past Simple? Complete the sentences.

1 I _____ (cook) when the phone _____ (ring).

2 While she _____ (drive), she _____ (see) an accident.

3 They _____ (watch) TV when the lights _____ (go) out.

4 He _____ (fall) while he _____ (run).

5 When I _____ (arrive), they _____ (have) dinner.

6 We _____ (walk) home when it _____ (start) to rain.

3 Choose 'when' or 'while'.

1 I was reading (when / while) the baby was sleeping.

2 She was cooking (when / while) the phone rang.

3 (When / While) we were walking, we met an old friend.

4 He broke his leg (when / while) he was skiing.

5 (When / While) the film started, everyone was talking.

6 They arrived (when / while) we were having lunch.

4 Complete the story with the Past Simple or Past Continuous.

Yesterday evening, I (1) _____ (sit) at home when I (2) _____ (hear) a strange noise. I (3) _____ (go) to the window and (4) _____ (look) out. It (5) _____ (rain) hard, and a little cat (6) _____ (try) to climb the tree.

1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

5 _____ 6 _____

5 Find and correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 *I were watching TV when you called.*

_____

2 *She was cook when the phone rang.*

_____

3 *While I was walk, I saw a dog.*

_____

4 *They was playing in the park.*

_____

5 *What were you do at midnight?*

_____

Soluciones

Answer key.

1 · Past Continuous

1 was watching 2 were playing 3 wasn't listening 4 were … doing
5 were waiting 6 was shining / were singing

2 · Past Continuous or Past Simple?

1 was cooking / rang 2 was driving / saw 3 were watching / went
4 fell / was running 5 arrived / were having 6 were walking / started

3 · when or while

1 while 2 when 3 While 4 while 5 When 6 while

4 · The story

1 was sitting 2 heard 3 went 4 looked 5 was raining 6 was trying

5 · Error correction

1 I was watching TV when you called. 2 She was cooking when the phone rang.
3 While I was walking, I saw a dog. 4 They were playing in the park. 5 What were you doing at midnight?