

Unit 6

Past continuous (I was doing)

A Study this example situation:



Yesterday Karen and Jim played tennis. They started at 10 o'clock and finished at 11.30. So, at 10.30 they **were playing** tennis.

They **were playing** = they were in the middle of playing. They had not finished playing.

Was/were -ing is the *past continuous*:

I/he/she/it	was	playing
we/you/they	were	doing
		working etc.

B I **was doing** something = I was in the middle of doing something at a certain time. The action or situation had already started before this time, but had not finished:



C Compare the *past continuous* (I **was doing**) and *past simple* (I **did**):

Past continuous (in the middle of an action)

- I **was walking** home when I met Dan. (in the middle of walking home)
- Kate **was watching** TV when we arrived.

Past simple (complete action)

- I **walked** home after the party last night. (= all the way, completely)
- Kate **watched** TV a lot when she was ill last year.

D We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to say that something happened in the middle of something else:

- Matt **phoned** while we **were having** dinner.
- It **was raining** when I **got** up.
- I **saw** you in the park yesterday. You **were sitting** on the grass and **reading** a book.
- I **hurt** my back while I **was working** in the garden.

But we use the past simple to say that one thing happened after another:

- I **was walking** along the road when I **saw** Dan. So I **stopped**, and we **had** a chat.

Compare:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> When Karen arrived, we were having dinner. (= we had already started before she arrived) | <input type="checkbox"/> When Karen arrived, we had dinner. (= Karen arrived, and then we had dinner) |
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E Some verbs (for example, **know** and **want**) are not normally used in the continuous (see **Unit 4A**):

- We were good friends. We **knew** each other well. (*not* We were knowing)
- I was enjoying the party, but Chris **wanted** to go home. (*not* was wanting)

6.1 What were you doing at these times? Write sentences as in the examples.



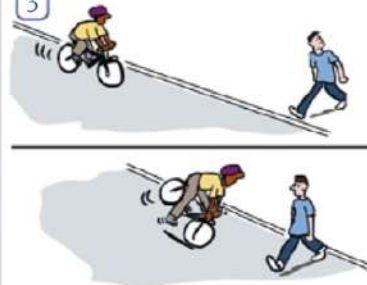
The past continuous is not always necessary (see the second example).

- (at 8 o'clock yesterday evening) I was having dinner.
- (at 5 o'clock last Monday) I was on a bus on my way home.
- (at 10.15 yesterday morning)
- (at 4.30 this morning)
- (at 7.45 yesterday evening)
- (half an hour ago)

6.2 Use your own ideas to complete the sentences. Use the past continuous.

- Matt phoned while we were having dinner.
- The doorbell rang while I
- The car began to make a strange noise when we
- Jessica fell asleep while she
- The television was on, but nobody

6.3 Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.

<p>1</p>  <p>I <u>saw</u> (see) Sue in town yesterday, but she (not / see) me. She (look) the other way.</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>I (meet) Tom and Jane at the airport a few weeks ago. They (go) to Paris and I (go) to Rome. We (have) a chat while we (wait) for our flights.</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>I (cycle) home yesterday when a man (step) out into the road in front of me. I (go) quite fast, but luckily I (manage) to stop in time and (not / hit) him.</p>
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6.4 Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.

- Jenny was waiting (wait) for me when I arrived (arrive).
- 'What (you / do) at this time yesterday?' 'I was asleep.'
- '..... (you / go) out last night?' 'No, I was too tired.'
- How fast (you / drive) when the accident (happen)?
- Sam (take) a picture of me while I (not / look).
- We were in a very difficult position. We (not / know) what to do.
- I haven't seen Alan for ages. When I last (see) him, he (try) to find a job.
- I (walk) along the street when suddenly I (hear) footsteps behind me. Somebody (follow) me. I was scared and I (start) to run.
- When I was young, I (want) to be a pilot.
- Last night I (drop) a plate when I (do) the washing-up. Fortunately it (not / break).