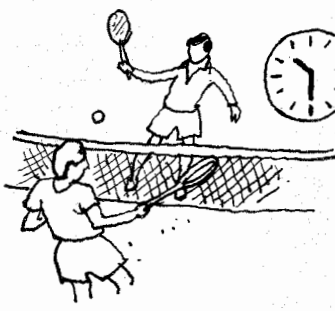


UNIT 12 Past continuous (I was doing)

a) Study this example situation:



Yesterday Tom and Jim played tennis. They began at 10 o'clock and finished at 11 o'clock.

What were they doing at 10.30?
They were playing tennis (at 10.30).

'They were playing' means that they were in the middle of playing tennis. They had started playing but they hadn't finished.

This is the *past continuous* tense:

I/he/she was } playing
we/they/you were }

We use the past continuous to say that someone was in the middle of doing something at a certain time. The action or situation had already started before this time but hadn't finished:

- This time last year I **was living** in Brazil.
- What were you **doing** at 10 o'clock last night?

b) The past continuous does not tell us whether an action was finished or not. Perhaps it was finished, perhaps not. Compare:

- Tom **was cooking** the dinner. (*past continuous*) = He was in the middle of cooking the dinner and we don't know whether he finished cooking it.
- Tom **cooked** the dinner. (*past simple*) = He began and finished it.

c) We often use the past continuous (**I was doing**) and the past simple (**I did**) together to say that something happened in the middle of something else:

- Tom **burnt** his hand when he **was cooking** the dinner.
- I saw Jim in the park. He **was sitting** on the grass and **reading** a book.
- It **was raining** when I got up.
- While I **was working** in the garden, I **hurt** my back.

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

- Yesterday evening Tom was having a bath when the phone rang. He got out of the bath and **answered** the phone.

Compare:

- When Tom arrived, we **were having** dinner. (*past continuous*) = We had already started dinner before Tom arrived.
- When Tom arrived, we **had** dinner. (*past simple*) = Tom arrived and then we had dinner.

Note: There are some verbs (for example **know**) which are not normally used in continuous tenses. For a list of these verbs see Unit 3b.

UNIT 12 Exercises

12.1 Here is a list of some things that Ann did yesterday (and the times at which she did them):

1 8.45-9.15 had breakfast	4 12.45-1.30 had lunch
2 9.15-10.00 read the newspaper	5 2.30-3.30 washed some clothes
3 10.00-12.00 cleaned her flat	6 4.00-6.00 watched television

Now write sentences saying what she was doing at these times:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1 At 9 o'clock <u>she was having breakfast</u> | 4 At 1 o'clock |
| 2 At 9.30 she | 5 At 3 o'clock |
| 3 At 11 o'clock | 6 At 5 o'clock |

12.2 A group of people were staying in a hotel. One evening the fire alarm rang. Use the words in brackets to make sentences saying what each person was doing at the time.

Example: (Don / have / a bath) Don was having a bath.

- (Ann / write / a letter in her room) Ann
- (George / get / ready to go out) George
- (Carol and Dennis / have / dinner) Carol and Dennis
- (Tom / make / a phone call) Tom

12.3 Make sentences from the words in brackets. Put the verbs into the correct form, past simple (I did) or past continuous (I was doing).

Example: (I / fall / asleep when I / watch / television) I fell asleep when I was watching television.

- (the phone / ring / when I / have / a shower) The phone
- (it / begin / to rain when I / walk / home)
- (we / see / an accident when we / wait / for the bus)

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

Example: While Tom was cooking (cook) the dinner, the phone rang (ring).

- George (fall) off the ladder while he (paint) the ceiling.
- Last night I (read) in bed when suddenly I (hear) a scream.
- (you/watch) television when I phoned you?
- Ann (wait) for me when I (arrive).
- I (not/drive) very fast when the accident (happen).
- I (break) a plate last night. I (do) the washing-up when it (slip) out of my hand.
- Tom (take) a photograph of me while I (not/look).
- We (not/go) out because it (rain).
- What (you/do) at this time yesterday?
- I (see) Carol at the party. She (wear) a really beautiful dress.