

GRAMMAR SUPPLEMENT

THE PAST CONTINUOUS

1.1 USE

- a) **Interrupted action in the past.** Use the past continuous to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually a shorter action in the simple past. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.



- I **was watching** TV when she called.
 - When the phone rang, she **was writing** a letter.
 - While we **were having** the picnic, it started to rain.
 - What **were** you **doing** when the earthquake happened?
- b) **Specific time as an interruption.**
- Last night at 10 pm, I **was playing** a computer game.
 - Yesterday at this time, I **was sitting** at my desk at work.
 - What **were** you **doing** this time last year?
- c) **Parallel actions.** When you use the past continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions were happening at the same time.
- I **was studying** while he **was making** dinner.
 - While Ellen **was reading**, Tim **was watching** a video.
 - **Were** you **listening** while he **was talking**?

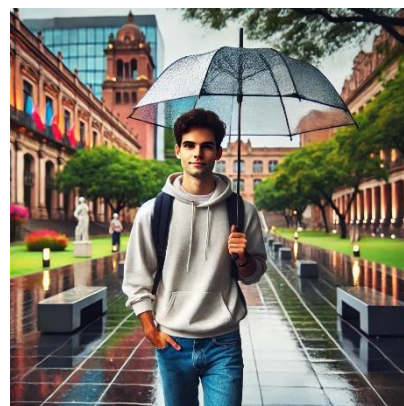
1.2 FORM

The past continuous is formed using the past form of “to be” **was / were + verb-ing**. Questions are created by inverting the subject and was / were. Negatives are made with not.

- Affirmative: You **were studying** when she called.
- Question: **Were** you **studying** when she called?
- Negative: You **were not studying** when she called.

1.3 Practice Exercise A

Look at the picture. This is your friend Daniel. You saw him yesterday. What was he doing? Write positive and negative sentences.



1. [wear / a jacket]

.....

2. [carry / backpack]

.....

3. [go / to class]

4. [use / an umbrella]

5. [ride / a bicycle]

1.4 Practice Exercise B

Complete the questions. Use **was / were + verb-ing**. Use **what / where / why** to make questions if necessary.

QUESTION	ANSWER
Example: [you / study] <i>Were you studying</i> here in 2023?	Yes, I was. I started university in 2022.
1. [you / do] at 2 am?	I was sleeping.
2. [it / rain] when you were going to class this morning?	No, it wasn't. It stopped before I left my house.
3. [Ana / do] last night?	She was studying.
4. [Enrique / study] yesterday?	He has an exam today.
5. [you / go] when Tomás saw you yesterday?	I was going to the mall.

1.5 Practice Exercise C

Put the verbs in past simple or past continuous to complete the sentences.

1. I (fall) down while I (go) down the stairs.
2. He (drive) fast when he (have) the accident.
3. It (rain) when we (arrive) home last night.
4. I (not answer) your text because I (work).
5. What they (do) when the electricity (go) out?

1.6 Practice Exercise D

Put the verb in the past continuous or past simple.

Yesterday, some students (1:sit) in the library when they (2:hear) a loud noise. Everyone (3:look) to see what (4:happen). A librarian (5:run) to the door because a student (6:drop) a bag. The bag (7:make) a big noise. While the librarian (8:check) the bag, the students (9:talk) quietly. Then the librarian (10:smile) and said everything was okay.

1.7 Answer Key

Practice exercise A

1. He was wearing a jacket.
2. He was carrying a backpack.
3. He was going to class.
4. He was using an umbrella.
5. He was riding his bicycle.

Practice exercise B.

1. What were you doing at 2AM?
2. Was it raining when you were going to class this morning?
3. What was Ana doing last night?
4. Was Enrique studying yesterday?
5. Where were you going when Tomás saw you yesterday?

Practice exercise C.

1. I fell down while I was going down the stairs.
2. He was driving fast when he had the accident.
3. It was raining when we arrived home last night.
4. I didn't answer your text because I was working.
5. What were they doing when the electricity went out?

Practice exercise D.

Yesterday, some students (1) were sitting in the library when they (2) heard a loud noise. Everyone (3) looked to see what (4) happened. A librarian (5) ran to the door because a student (6) dropped a bag. The bag (7) made a big noise. While the librarian (8) was checking the bag, the students (9) were talking quietly. Then the librarian (10) smiled and said everything was okay.