

Past Continuous vs Past Simple – Worksheet 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Score: / 38



Do this worksheet
online and check your
answers instantly

Exercise 1: Past continuous forms

Complete the sentences with the past continuous form of the verbs in brackets.

Example: She ___ (read) at 9 pm. → was reading

1. At 8 o'clock last night, I _____ (watch) TV.
2. The children _____ (play) in the garden at 5 pm.
3. Maria _____ (not / sleep) when I called.
4. We _____ (not / listen) to the teacher.
5. _____ (you / work) at 10 am yesterday?
6. It _____ (rain) when we left the house.
7. What _____ (Sam / do) at midnight?
8. My parents _____ (cook) dinner at seven.

Exercise 2: Choose the correct form

Complete the sentences with the words from the box. There are two extra words.

WORD BOX

was cooking were walking broke saw was driving were having fell arrived
was seeing did break

9. I _____ dinner when the phone rang.
10. We _____ in the park when it started to rain.
11. Leo _____ his leg while he was skiing.
12. While I was waiting for the bus, I _____ an old friend.
13. She _____ to work when her car stopped.
14. They _____ lunch when the doorbell rang.
15. The baby _____ asleep while we were watching the film.
16. Our train _____ ten minutes late, so we missed the start of the concert.

Exercise 3: Past simple or past continuous?

Complete the sentences with the past simple or past continuous form of the verbs in brackets.

Example: I ____ (walk) home when I saw Paul. → was walking

17. I was reading a book when the lights _____ (go) out.
18. While Anna _____ (have) a shower, someone knocked on the door.
19. Yesterday I _____ (get) up at seven, had breakfast and went to school.
20. When I arrived at the party, everyone _____ (dance).
21. Ben _____ (cut) his finger while he was making a salad.
22. What _____ (you / do) when the accident happened?
23. I _____ (not / see) the sign because I was looking at my phone.
24. _____ (she / call) you while you were on holiday?

Exercise 4: Find the mistake

Each sentence has one mistake. Write the correct sentence.

Example: He were sleeping at 11 pm. → He was sleeping at 11 pm.

25. I was walk home when I saw the accident.

26. We was watching a film at 9 pm.

27. While I was cooking, I was burning my hand.

28. She didn't went to school yesterday.

29. What did you doing at 6 pm?

30. Tom was runing for the bus when he fell.

31. Were you see the film last night?

32. The phone rang while I were having a bath.

Exercise 5: Make sentences

Put the words in the correct order to make sentences or questions.

Example: was / he / cooking / at 7 pm → He was cooking at 7 pm.

33. was / I / when / sleeping / rang / the phone

34. you / were / what / doing / at 9 pm

35. weren't / we / TV / watching

36. did / see / you / while / her / you / were / shopping

37. she / while / was / dropped / her phone / she / running

38. were / they / playing / tennis / it / when / started / to rain

Answer key – Past Continuous vs Past Simple – Worksheet 1

Exercise 1: Past continuous forms

1. **was watching**
I + was + verb-ing.
2. **were playing**
Plural subjects use were + verb-ing.
3. **wasn't sleeping**
Negative: was not (wasn't) + verb-ing.
4. **weren't listening**
Negative with we: were not (weren't) + verb-ing.
5. **Were you working**
Question: Were + subject + verb-ing.
6. **was raining**
It + was + verb-ing for an action in progress.
7. **was Sam doing**
Wh- question: What + was + subject + verb-ing.
8. **were cooking**
They (my parents) + were + verb-ing.

Exercise 2: Choose the correct form

9. **was cooking**
The longer action in progress uses the past continuous.
10. **were walking**
Background action with we: were + verb-ing.
11. **broke**
The short action that happened uses the past simple.
12. **saw**
A short, finished action interrupts the longer one: past simple.
13. **was driving**
The action in progress uses the past continuous.
14. **were having**
The longer action interrupted by the doorbell: past continuous.
15. **fell**
A short action: past simple of fall is fell.
16. **arrived**
A single finished action uses the past simple.

Exercise 3: Past simple or past continuous?

17. **went**
The short action that interrupts uses the past simple.
18. **was having**
While + the longer action in progress: past continuous.
19. **got**
A list of finished actions in order uses the past simple.
20. **was dancing**
The action already in progress when I arrived: past continuous.
21. **cut**
A short action: the past simple of cut is cut.
22. **were you doing**
Asking about an action in progress: What + were + you + verb-ing.
23. **didn't see**
Past simple negative: didn't + base form.
24. **Did she call**
Past simple question: Did + subject + base form.

Exercise 4: Find the mistake

25. **I was walking home when I saw the accident.**
The past continuous needs the -ing form: was walking.
26. **We were watching a film at 9 pm.**
With we, use were, not was.
27. **While I was cooking, I burned my hand.**
A short, sudden action uses the past simple.
28. **She didn't go to school yesterday.**
After didn't, use the base form: go.
29. **What were you doing at 6 pm?**
The past continuous question uses were, not did.
30. **Tom was running for the bus when he fell.**
Run doubles the n before -ing: running.
31. **Did you see the film last night?**
A past simple question uses did + base form.
32. **The phone rang while I was having a bath.**
With I, use was, not were.

Exercise 5: Make sentences

33. I was sleeping when the phone rang.

Past continuous for the long action, past simple after when.

34. What were you doing at 9 pm?

Wh- question: What + were + you + verb-ing.

35. We weren't watching TV.

Subject + weren't + verb-ing + object.

36. Did you see her while you were shopping?

Past simple question + while + past continuous.

37. She dropped her phone while she was running.

Past simple for the short action, past continuous after while.

38. They were playing tennis when it started to rain.

The rain interrupted the game: past continuous + when + past simple.

Notes for teachers: Start with a simple timeline: draw a long line for the past continuous (background action) and a cross for the past simple (short action that interrupts). Typical mistakes are 'was walk' instead of 'was walking', 'we was', spelling errors such as 'runing', and using the past continuous for short completed actions ('I was burning my hand'). As a follow-up, ask pairs to tell each other what they were doing at specific times yesterday and what happened that interrupted them.