

Unit 6

Past continuous (I was doing)

A Study this example situation:



Yesterday Karen and Jim played tennis. They began at 10 o'clock and finished at 11.30.

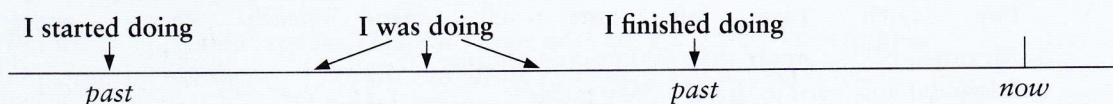
So, at 10.30 they **were playing** tennis.

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:



- ☐ This time last year I **was living** in Brazil.
- ☐ What **were you doing** at 10 o'clock last night?
- ☐ I waved to Helen, but she **wasn't looking**.

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 Dave.
(in the middle of an action)
- ☐ Kate **was watching** television when we arrived.

Past simple (complete action)

- ☐ I **walked** home after the party last night.
(= all the way, completely)
- ☐ Kate **watched** television 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** Dave. 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) |
|--|--|

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)

Exercises

Unit 6

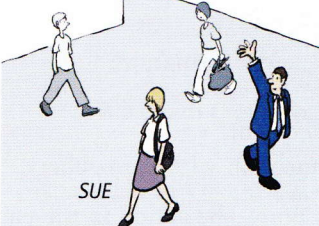
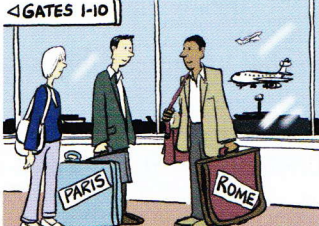
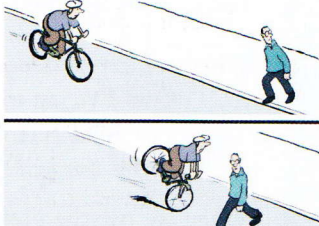
6.1 What were you doing at these times? Write sentences as in the examples. The past continuous is not always necessary (see the second example).

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

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

- 1 Matt phoned while we were having dinner.
- 2 The doorbell rang while I
- 3 We saw an accident while we
- 4 Ann fell asleep while she
- 5 The television was on, but nobody

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

<p>1</p>  <p>SUE</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>
---	--	--

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

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