

Past Continuous Tense

What is the form of Past Continuous Tense?

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| You / We / They | Subject + were + verb (in present participle form) - They were having basketball training this time yesterday. |
| I / He / She / It | Subject + was + verb (in present participle form) - I was studying when my mum came back. |

When should we use Past Continuous Tense?

Past Continuous Tense can be used when:

1. A longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually a shorter action with simple past tense.

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| I was <u>sleeping</u> when the robber <u>broke into my house</u> . (longer action) (shorter action) |
| They were <u>having dinner</u> when I <u>arrived</u> . (longer action) (shorter action) |

2. To describe two actions that were happening at the same time, which can also be called parallel actions.

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| I was watching the TV while she was doing her homework. |
| My brother was practicing piano while my mother was preparing dinner. |

A series of parallel actions can be put together in order to describe the atmosphere at the particular time in the past.

Example:

When the teacher entered the classroom, it was in complete chaos. Some students were chatting loudly, some were doing their homework, some were running around the classroom and some of them were still having their lunch. The teacher angrily shouted at the students and asked them to return to their seats quietly.

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| The above paragraph depicts the scenery of the classroom at the particular time in the past. |
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3. To describe a habitual action in the past.

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| They were always complaining about the services. |
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| My sister was constantly late to class, her class teacher was very angry about it. |
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When v.s. While?

Both “**When**” and “**While**” can be used to describe two things happening at the same time, but there are some difference between them.

| While | When |
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| Usually followed by verb in Present Participle form. | Usually followed by Simple Past Tense |
| Usually followed by long actions/continuous actions. - I was sleeping while he was watching the TV. | Used to describe short actions/single actions. - I was listening to music when he entered my room. |

What is the difference between Past Continuous Tense and Simple Past Tense?

| Simple Past Tense | Past Continuous Tense |
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| Describe main events - Helen was having online lesson when her sister interrupted. | Describe background events - Helen was having online lesson when her sister interrupted. |
| Describe an action that was completed in the past. - I read a book yesterday. | Describe an action that was in progress at a time in the past - I was reading a book yesterday at this time. |
| Followed by verbs in past tense. | Followed by verbs in present participle form. |

Past Continuous Tense in active form and passive form?

Past Continuous Tense can be presented in both active form and passive form.

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| Active | <p>Subject + was/were + verb (in present participle form)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher was punishing Tom after school as he did not finish his homework. - The waiter was serving the customers when the thing happened. |
| Passive | <p>Subject + was/were + being + verb (in past participle form)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tom was being punished by the teacher as he did not finish his homework. - The customers were being served by the waiter when the thing happened. |

Common non-continuous verbs?

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| Feelings | Hate, Like, Love, Prefer, Want, Wish |
| Senses | Appear, Feel, Hear, See, Seem, Smell, Sound, Taste |
| Communications | Agree, Deny, Disagree, Mean, Promise, Satisfy, Surprise |
| Thinking | Believe, Imagine, Know, Mean, Realize, Recognize, Remember, Understand |
| Other states | Be, Belong, Concern, Depend, Involve, Matter, Need, Owe, Own, Possess |