

2

The past continuous

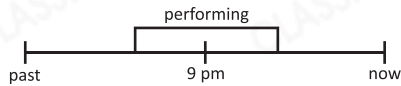


Usage

We use the past continuous tense to:

1. emphasise an action that was going on around a given time in the past.
2. emphasise an action that lasted for a period of time in the past.

e.g. Andy Lai **was performing** in the concert at 9 pm yesterday.



e.g. My sister **was doing** her homework this morning.



3. talk about two past actions happening at the same time.
4. talk about what was happening (the **longer** action) when another action took place (the **shorter** action).

e.g. While Mum was preparing dinner, Jenny **was sleeping** on the sofa.



e.g. David **was building** a dog house when he **hurt** his finger.





Part 1 Statements

The past continuous tense is formed by '**was / were + ing**'. We form statements in the past continuous tense in the following ways:

Positive statement			Negative statement		
I / He / She / It	was	studying.	I / He / She / It	was not / wasn't	studying.
You / We / They	were		You / We / They	were not / weren't	



Educator's Tips

We usually use the past continuous tense with time expressions such as *at 9 am yesterday, the whole afternoon, all night, from 1 pm to 2 pm.*

e.g. My grandparents **were doing Tai Chi** at 6 am this morning.

e.g. Patrick **was reading** his new novel the whole night.



Exercise 1

Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the verbs in brackets. **Underline the time expressions.**

- The teachers were having (have) a meeting at 5 pm yesterday.
- Angela _____ (sleep) on the sofa the whole night.
- Dr. Johnson _____ (not teach) a class this morning. He _____
_____ (discuss) a project with other professors.
- The students _____ (have) a swimming class in the eighth period last Friday.
- Aunt Louisa _____ (take) the MTR to Causeway Bay from 5 to 5:30 this evening.
- Amy and her husband _____ (not stay) in the hotel in the past few days. They _____ (do) sightseeing in London.



Part 2 Yes / No-questions

We form *yes / no*-questions and short answers in the past continuous tense in the following ways:

Question			Short answer		
Was	I / he / she / it	running?	Yes,	I / he / she / it	was.
Were	you / we / they			you / we / they	were.
			No,	I / he / she / it	was not / wasn't.
				you / we / they	were not / weren't.



Educator's Tips



Remember that we shouldn't use the continuous form for some of the verbs about senses, feelings, possession, states of mind, etc.

X *I was hearing a loud bang this morning.*

✓ *I heard a loud bang this morning.*

Exercise 2

These people were having a good time this morning. Look at the pictures. Form questions and answers using the correct form of the words in brackets.

1. A: _____ *Was the old man feeding the bird* _____? (old man / feed the bird)

B: _____ *Yes, he was* _____.



2. A: _____? (girls / play hide-and-seek)

B: _____.



3. A: _____? (boy / catch the butterfly)

B: _____.



4. A: _____? (man / sit on the bench)

B: _____.





Part 3 While / When

- When we talk about the order of two actions (a shorter one and a longer one), we often use the past continuous tense with *when* or *while*.

	Situation	Example
When	To introduce the shorter action (that interrupted the longer one which was happening)	<u>When</u> the phone rang , I was sleeping. ↑ Shorter action
While	To introduce the longer action that was happening (before the shorter one interrupted)	<u>While</u> I was sleeping , the phone rang. ↑ Longer action

We use the **past continuous tense** in the *while*-clause for the longer action and the **simple past tense** in the main clause for the shorter one.

While-clause	Main clause
<u>While</u> I was surfing the Net,	the computer suddenly broke down.

OR

We use the **simple past tense** in the *when*-clause for the shorter action and the **past continuous tense** in the main clause for the longer one.

When-clause	Main clause
<u>When</u> my parents arrived home,	my little sister was watching TV.

- When we talk about two actions happening at the same time in the past, we often use the past continuous tense in **both clauses** with *while*.

e.g. While my father **was reading** the newspaper, my younger brothers **were doing** their homework.



Educator's Tips



When we start a sentence with a *while*- or *when*-clause, we need to put a comma between the two clauses. A comma is not needed if we start the sentence with the main clause.

e.g. While the students **were doing** their test papers, the teacher **was walking** around the classroom.

e.g. I **was washing** my hair **when** the water supply **stopped** suddenly.



Theme: Crime**Text Type:** Newspaper article**Exercise 3**

Jack is reading a newspaper article about a murder. Complete the article with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

Young Man Found Dead in Kwun Tong

A young man was found dead on a back street in Kwun Tong yesterday morning. Wong, 26, was a security guard working at Fuk Ling Industrial Building. His body was discovered at about 8:30 am yesterday. While a street cleaner **(1)** was sweeping (sweep) an alley behind the building, she **(2)** _____ (see) Wong lying there so she called the police immediately. The ambulance **(3)** _____ (arrive) shortly after the call but he had already died.

‘Tall Man (Wong’s nickname) was a good man,’ Leung, Wong’s colleague, said sorrowfully. ‘Last night we **(4)** _____ (work) from 8 to 11 pm together as usual. I can’t believe he was killed.’



According to Leung, 53, Wong and he were both on a night shift.

‘I **(5)** _____ (stay) in the control panel room while Wong **(6)** _____ (look) around the building after 11 pm,’ Leung recalled.

‘From the CCTV record, it was shown that while Wong **(7)** _____ (patrol), he had a fight with a man in all black,’ said the police sergeant. ‘After watching the CCTV record, our investigators **(8)** _____ (believe) that Wong **(9)** _____ (call) the control panel room for assistance when the killer suddenly **(10)** _____ (stab) him with a knife.’

‘I guess that when Wong called for help, I **(11)** _____ (not sit) in the control panel room because I was in the toilet. I’m so regretful now as I **(12)** _____ (not save) him on time,’ said Leung.

Unit Recap

Crystal wrote a travel journal but she made some mistakes. Correct the underlined mistakes by writing the correct form of the verbs in the spaces provided.

My trip to Tokyo

● Day 1 (Shibuya)

● I (1) don't sleep well the night before as I was too excited about the trip to Tokyo! It has been my dream for years!

● We did not do our research until the last minute before the trip. Luckily, we (2) have reserved our flights and hotel rooms online 2 months ago, so we had a pretty good deal.



● The flight was such a great experience. While my friends (3) took a nap on the plane, I (4) enjoyed the beautiful view of clouds from the window!

● We decided to go to our hotel in Shibuya by JR train but we didn't know how to buy tickets. We (5) read the JR network map when a Japanese woman suddenly offered to help us. She was so friendly!

● Finally we checked in at the hotel successfully. After we checked in, we (6) were going shopping. The streets were so bustling at night that many people (7) shopped while the others (8) are dining in restaurants. From 7 pm to 8 pm, we (9) had dinner at a ramen shop. The cook was cooking the tasty ramen for us when we (10) take some photos of him! The food was really yummy!



1. _____

6. _____

2. _____

7. _____

3. _____

8. _____

4. _____

9. _____

5. _____

10. _____



Vocabulary:

bustling (adj.): full of busy activity

dine (v.): to eat the main meal in the evening