

Unit 10

The simple past & past continuous tenses

I **found** a stray kitten while it **was looking for** food. It **was** weak and fragile **back then**.

I **adopted** my caretaker in a back alley **a year ago**.



Grammar in Context

Theme: Teenage life—leisure and hobbies

Words by Theme



Read the following story and answer the questions.

Far Apart but Close at Heart

[1] A deadly disease **was spreading** over the city. It **was** the first lockdown in the area where Emma **lived** because several residents of her block **caught** the disease. Emma **stayed** home all the time. She **was getting** very lonely.

[2] One day, while Emma **was having** dinner alone, she **heard** an enchanting melody through the balcony. Her neighbour **was playing** the piano. It **was** a tender song—‘River Flows in You’. She **found** the music soothing¹. She **wanted** to play a duet² with him so she **left** a note on his doormat. She **was practising** the piano every day during her first year at university, but she **gave it up** when she later **became** occupied³ with studies. However, her passion⁴ for music **was** still there.

[3] Someone **rang** the doorbell of Emma’s flat. When she **looked** through the peephole, her neighbour **was standing** right there! He **was placing** a note on her doormat! She **blushed**. The note **read** as follows: ‘Shall we play “New Light”?’ An hour later, soft music **drifted** in while she **was tidying** her room. She **tapped** on the piano keys⁵ and **followed** along. The two hearts **were getting** closer and closer ...

1. Complete the table using the blue words in paragraphs 1–2.

Regular verbs	_____ lived _____, _____ and _____
Irregular verbs	_____ was _____, _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____

2. Circle the correct answers.

The orange words are verbs in the past continuous tense. They are usually about (ongoing / completed) actions. They refer to (longer / shorter) actions.

3. Which two connectives link up actions of the simple past tense and the past continuous tense in the last paragraph? Circle the TWO connectives.

PART 1 The simple past tense

We use the simple past tense to talk about completed actions in the past.



The sink **started** to leak **last week**.

I **called** the plumber **yesterday**.



now

PART 1A Time expressions

<i>last night / Tuesday / week / month / summer / year</i>	<i>He starred in a Marvel's superhero film last year.</i>		
<i>five minutes / four days / three months ago</i>	<i>Joseph went to the bathroom ten minutes ago.</i>		
<i>yesterday</i>	<i>just now</i>	<i>in 2015 / the past</i>	<i>Hong Kong was a fishing village in the past.</i>
<i>this afternoon</i>	<i>the day before</i>	<i>once upon a time</i>	<i>Once upon a time, a troll lived under the bridge.</i>

PART 1B Forms with the verb to be

Statements		Questions			Short answers		
I He She It	<i>was</i> <i>was not (wasn't)</i>	<i>Was</i>	I he she it	sick?	Yes,	I / he / she / it	<i>was.</i>
You We They	<i>were</i> <i>were not (weren't)</i>				<i>Were</i>		you we they
					Yes,	you / we / they	<i>were.</i>
					No,		<i>were not (weren't).</i>

PART 1C Forms with other verbs

Statements		Questions			Short answers		
I / You / We / They / He / She / It	<i>cried</i> <i>did not (didn't) cry.</i>	<i>Did</i>	I / you / we / they / he / she / it	cry?	Yes,	I / you / we / they / he / she / it	<i>did.</i>
					No,		<i>did not (didn't).</i>

PART 1D Regular verbs in the simple past form

Verbs	Changes	Examples	
Most verbs	+ ed	<i>talk</i> → <i>talked</i>	<i>work</i> → <i>worked</i>
Verbs ending in -e	+ d	<i>bake</i> → <i>baked</i>	<i>hate</i> → <i>hated</i>
Verbs ending in a consonant + -y	-y + ied	<i>cry</i> → <i>cried</i>	<i>fry</i> → <i>fried</i>
Most verbs ending in a vowel + a consonant	consonant × 2 + ed	<i>drop</i> → <i>dropped</i>	<i>knit</i> → <i>knitted</i>
		<i>admit</i> → <i>admitted</i>	<i>occur</i> → <i>occurred</i>

Reminder!

Note the exceptions to the rule for verbs ending in a vowel + a consonant.

Verbs ending in -w, -x or -y			The last syllable not stressed
<i>follow</i> → <i>followed</i>	<i>mix</i> → <i>mixed</i>	<i>pray</i> → <i>prayed</i>	<i>gossip</i> → <i>gossiped</i>

PART 1E Irregular verbs in the simple past form

Change the vowel	<i>ring</i> → <i>rang</i> <i>wake</i> → <i>woke</i>	Change the consonant	<i>make</i> → <i>made</i> <i>send</i> → <i>sent</i>
Change the whole word	<i>think</i> → <i>thought</i> <i>sell</i> → <i>sold</i>	No change	<i>hurt</i> → <i>hurt</i> <i>hit</i> → <i>hit</i>

Exercise 1.1

There is one mistake in each sentence. Underline the mistake and write the correct word above it.

1. Mum fell ill. She <u>had</u> ^{did} not cook last night.	6. Dad hears a shocking news this afternoon.
2. Dan browses the shopping app just now.	7. It was cold. He ziped up his jacket.
3. Lucas choose to leave five minutes ago.	8. The heavy rain yesterday lead to the flood.
4. In the past, people relyed on the shadow of a sundial to tell time.	9. Our teacher splitted the class into groups of three in the last lesson.
5. Typhoon Haiyan damages thousands of homes in Asia about a decade ago.	10. In the beginning, Adam and Eve did not wore clothes in the Garden of Eden.

Exercise 1.2

Jayden is writing a diary entry. Complete the entry using the correct form of the given verbs.

Yesterday (1) _____ (be) my 18th birthday. I (2) _____ (think) that it would be nice to do something meaningful, but I (3) _____ (not know) what exactly to do, so my sister Sharon (4) _____ (suggest) donating blood and (5) _____ (accompany) me to the blood donation centre this morning. When we (6) _____ (arrive) at the centre, the nurses (7) _____ (make) sure that we were suitable donors. Then we (8) _____ (follow) what they (9) _____ (say). We (10) _____ (put) down our personal belongings and (11) _____ (lean) back in the lounge chairs. The nurses (12) _____ (insert) needles into our arms. Around ten minutes later, they (13) _____ (pull) out the needles and (14) _____ (lead) us to the rest area. I (15) _____ (not feel) well when I (16) _____ (get) up as I (17) _____ (not eat) enough for breakfast. Sharon and I (18) _____ (rest) for a while. I (19) _____ (have) some biscuits and (20) _____ (feel) a lot better ...



PART 2 The past continuous tense

We use the past continuous tense to talk about:

- An action that was happening at a particular time in the past

Daisy *was napping* at 3 pm yesterday.



- An action that was happening when another action in the past occurred

The deer *was eating* grass **when** the tiger *attacked* it.



- Two actions that continued over the same period of time in the past

Alex *was ironing* **while** May *was painting* her nails.



PART 2A Forms

Statements		Questions			Short answers			
I	<i>was</i>	<i>singing.</i>	<i>Was</i>	I he she it	<i>singing?</i>	Yes,	I	<i>was.</i>
He	<i>was not (wasn't)</i>					No,	he she it	<i>was not (wasn't).</i>
She								
It								
You	<i>were</i>	<i>were.</i>	<i>Were</i>	you we they	<i>were not (weren't).</i>	Yes,	you	<i>were.</i>
We	<i>were not (weren't)</i>					No,	we	<i>were not (weren't).</i>
They								

Let's compare

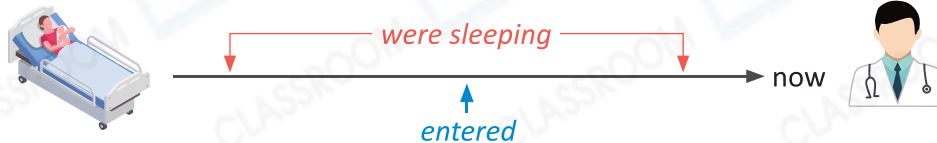
Past continuous tense	Present continuous tense
<p>Repeated actions in the past</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I <i>was always arguing</i> with my sister in those days. <p>Changes or growth in the past</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The city <i>was recovering</i> from SARS in the second half of 2003. 	<p>Repeated actions at present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It's <i>always raining</i> these days. <p>Changes or growth at present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The weather <i>is changing</i> rapidly.

PART 2B when and while

We usually use the connectives *when* and *while* to link two clauses that talk about past actions.

- *when* + simple past (= shorter action that interrupted)
- *when / while* + past continuous (= longer action that was ongoing)

The patients *were sleeping* **when** the doctor *entered* the ward.



James *was reading* **while / when** his sister *was playing* with her kitten.



Error Diagnosis

Do NOT replace *while* or *when* with *during* because we only use *during* with nouns.

Mum *was listening* to music *during* she *was cooking* dinner. ❌

Mum *was listening* to music **while / when** she *was cooking* dinner. ✅

DRILL Exercise 2.1

Complete the sentences in the simple past or past continuous tense.

- The door suddenly _____ (shut) when the thief was stealing (steal) from the safe.
- The young people next door _____ still _____ (party) at 3 am last night.
- Edgar _____ (take) photos while the ballet dancers _____ (pose).
- The bus _____ (stop) when Mrs Williams _____ (doze).
- _____ you _____ (travel) in Thailand when the university _____ (call) you for an interview?
- Mrs Gibson _____ (break) the vase while she _____ (dust) the cabinet.
- Ava and Ryan _____ (enjoy) the breathtaking scenery while they _____ (hike).
- The barista _____ (make) a coffee while the customers _____ (wait) patiently.
- _____ the passengers _____ (get) onto the lifeboats while the ship _____ (sink)?
- This time last year, I _____ (not attend) school. Instead, I _____ (recover) from my heart operation.
- I _____ (make) several good friends when I _____ (grow up) in the estate.



Exercise 2.2

Level Up

Complete what Jenna and her dad say using the correct form of the given verbs.

← Dad online

Jenna, (1) were you revising (you / revise) at 9 am? 1:30 pm

Yes, Dad ... 🤪 1:31 pm ✓✓

Hmm ... 😡 I (2) _____ (know) you (3) _____ (watch) TV when I (4) _____ (call). 1:32 pm

Of course not, believe me. I (5) _____ (work) very hard on my revision. 1:32 pm ✓✓

No, you (6) _____ (not do) any revision this morning and (7) _____ (not study) when I called. 1:33 pm

Urgh ... Dad, (8) _____ (you / spy) on me from somewhere throughout the morning? 😡 1:33 pm ✓✓

I (9) _____ (monitor) you from the camera while I (10) _____ (work) ... 1:34 pm

Exercise 2.3

Level Up



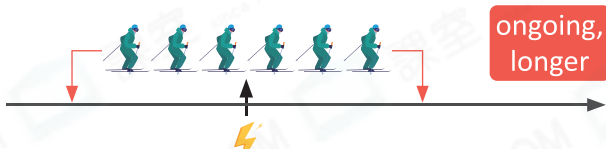
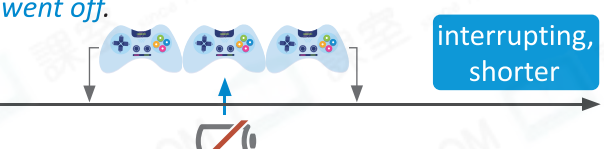
Grace is reading a description of Pompeii. Complete the description by putting *when* or *while* in the boxes and using the correct form of the given verbs. Write the letters (A–I) in the spaces provided.

Pompeii, located in what is now southern Italy, (1) G around 2,000 years ago. Back in AD 79, people there were doing different things (2) _____. Some (3) _____ in the marketplace. Some noblemen were watching plays in the theatres (4) _____. Farmers (5) _____. The ground was shaking violently (6) _____ and ran off in all directions.

Shortly after the first eruption, (7) _____ while (8) _____ the city; others were looking for shelter. The ash (9) _____, completely covering the city in a day.

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|--|
| A. | <input type="text"/> | Mount Vesuvius near the city _____ (erupt) |
| B. | | thick ash _____ (fall) |
| C. | | people _____ (shop) |
| D. | | some residents _____ (escape) |
| E. | | _____ (grow) hotter and thicker |
| F. | <input type="text"/> | people _____ (scream) |
| G. | <u>was</u> | (be) a busy city of the Roman Empire |
| H. | <input type="text"/> | others _____ (soak) in public baths |
| I. | | _____ (work) in the fields |

Let's compare

Past continuous tense	Simple past tense
<p>A continuous or unfinished action at a time in the past <i>I was writing a letter at 5 pm yesterday.</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">5 pm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">continuous action</p>	<p>A completed action in the past <i>I posted the letter at 5 pm yesterday.</i></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">5 pm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">completed action</p>
<p>An ongoing action when another action happened <i>They were skiing when it thundered.</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;">ongoing, longer</p>	<p>An action that interrupted an ongoing action <i>We were playing video games when the power went off.</i></p>  <p style="text-align: right;">interrupting, shorter</p>

Grammar Wrap-up

Charlotte is reading a newspaper article. Complete the article using the correct form of the given words.

while
when

bring have enter think sway start
rush elevate hit shatter remove see

Hong Kong Post

24 September 20XX

Typhoon Lychee: Hong Kong battered by violent storm

The Super Typhoon Lychee (1) _____ hit _____ Hong Kong over the weekend. It (2) _____ the South China Sea on Sunday and (3) _____ winds, rain and floods to the city.

Lots of people (4) _____ lunch (5) _____ the buildings (6) _____. Ms Chan, who lives in a 50-storey building, recalled, 'We (7) _____ that we were hallucinating. When we looked out the windows, we (8) _____ the buildings shaking.' Sharp gusts (9) _____ the windows of many high-rise buildings. (10) _____ cleaners (11) _____ the broken glass all over the streets, commuters (12) _____ to hurry back to work today.



There were devastating floods on outlying islands. 'My wife and I (13) _____ the oven, the water heater and all the other electrical appliances while the water (14) _____ into our restaurant,' said Mr Mok, the owner of a seafood restaurant on Peng Chau ...



Grammar in Pre-DSE Text Type

Theme: Teenage life—growing up

You are writing a short story. Complete the story using the given phrases and the correct form of the given verbs. Write the letters (A–N) in the spaces provided.

Words by Theme



One Good Turn Deserves Another

A girl (1) C a cross-border highway between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. She was sticking her thumb out; she (2) _____ to stop. However, most (3) _____. Fai, a fifty-year-old truck driver, transported goods to garment warehouses in Shenzhen every day. He (4) _____ while (5) _____ the highway. He pulled aside the truck and rolled down the window.

The girl was in her twenties. She looked weary and (6) _____. She asked nervously, 'Excuse me, sir ... My name's Cathy. Could ... could you give me a free ride to Tai Po?' He (7) _____ and agreed to do so as this girl right before him (8) _____ his late daughter, who died of blood cancer several years ago.

'Why do you hitchhike?' Fai asked her after some time. 'It's quite risky¹ to do so.'

'Something horrible (9) _____ when I (10) _____ after a big quarrel² with my parents,' she said. 'I miss Mum and Dad ...' The girl started weeping as she was trying to explain what happened during the month.

'You're fine now ... Take a nap ...' Fai continued driving while (11) _____.

Fai gently woke her up and asked her where to drop her. She replied, 'Seaview Villas, please.' She thanked him and asked for his phone number before she (12) _____. The following day, Fai (13) _____ that the girl was actually the daughter of a business tycoon. She just (14) _____. More unexpectedly, he received a phone call, 'Thank you for helping our daughter ...'



A. _____ (break) free after a month in captivity ³	H. he _____ (drive) along
B. _____ (tremble) a little bit	I. _____ (find) out from the news
C. <u>was standing</u> (stand) at the side of—	J. _____ (catch) sight of this young girl
D. _____ (leave) my home	K. she _____ (doze) off
E. _____ (remind) him of	L. _____ (hesitate ⁴) for a while
F. _____ (try) to get the passing cars	M. _____ (happen) to me a month ago
G. _____ (get) off the truck	N. just _____ (ignore) and left



More to take away

hitchhike (v.) = to travel by getting free rides in someone else's vehicle

We use the simple past tense to describe completed actions and the past continuous tense to emphasise continuous actions in the past. The sequence of events can therefore be narrated clearly, especially when there was an action interrupting an ongoing action.

- The lightning **struck** the tree and **split** it into halves last night. (simple past tense)
- The students **were sitting** their final exam at four o'clock yesterday. (past continuous tense)

Version 1

Lucas is writing a short story. Read the story excerpt. There are mistakes in the underlined parts.

Life Has No Replay Button



'It's dinnertime!' Chris's mother said.

'One second,' Chris replied. **(1)** He stared into the screen of his laptop and pressed hard the buttons on his game console when his mum was bursting into the room and ordering him to stop. He growled and reluctantly put down the console.

At the dinner table, **(2)** Chris's parents discussed their winter trip while he gulped the beef fried rice hastily. Chris's father asked him if he wanted to travel to Japan, but he said he would rather stay home and finish Cyberpunk 2800. His mother was furious, scolding him for knowing nothing but video games. **(3)** Chris was dashing back to his room and slamming the door.

(4) Again, he was sitting down in front of the laptop and picking up the console. 'They can never understand the fun of video games,' he talked to himself and continued his game. He wished that he was a strong warrior like his avatar, Agent X. **(5)** When that thought comes to his mind, a message box pops up.

'Do you want to be Agent X?' the message read. **(6)** Chris was rubbing his eyes and selecting 'Accept'. **(7)** Meanwhile, a gust of wind with sand blowed from the screen. **(8)** He was realising that he landed in the ruins of a city when he was seeing lots of huge flying spaceships overhead. **(9)** He was freaking out when Agent X was appearing out of nowhere. He was confused if he was sucked into the game.

'Welcome to my team, Chris!' Agent X said. 'Before you can become a warrior, you need to go through the tests at our training academy.' When they entered a battle hall, **(10)** hundreds of men fought in pairs. Chris was then told that he had to stay until he passed all the tests. The intense tests left Chris with aches and wounds all over his body. In every test, he found himself on the verge of death. As time went by, **(11)** he was fearing that he would never see his parents again. He told himself to pass all the tests with all his strength ...

Version 2

Correct the underlined parts in Version 1. Use the correct past tenses.

Life Has No Replay Button



'It's dinnertime!' Chris's mother said.

'One second,' Chris replied. **(1)** He was staring into the screen of his laptop and pressing hard the buttons on his game console when his mum burst into the room and ordered him to stop.

He growled and reluctantly put down the console.

At the dinner table, **(2)** _____

_____. Chris's father asked him if he wanted to travel to Japan, but he said he would rather stay home and finish Cyberpunk 2800. His mother was furious, scolding him for

knowing nothing but video games. **(3)** _____

(4) _____

'They can never understand the fun of video games,' he talked to himself and continued his game. He wished that he was a strong warrior like his avatar, Agent X. **(5)** _____

'Do you want to be Agent X?' the message read. **(6)** _____

(7) _____

(8) _____

_____ **(9)** _____

_____ He was confused if he was sucked into the game.

'Welcome to my team, Chris!' Agent X said. 'Before you can become a warrior, you need to go through the tests at our training academy.' When they entered a battle hall, **(10)** _____

_____. Chris was then told that he had to stay until he passed all the tests.

The intense tests left Chris with aches and wounds all over his body. In every test, he found himself on the verge of death. As time went by, **(11)** _____

_____. He told himself to pass all the tests with all his strength ...



Brain Breaks

What is the longest world record for playing a fighting video game?

Answer: According to Guinness World Records, the longest time for playing a fighting video game is 57 hours, achieved by a Canadian in 2016.

