

The Simple Past vs Past Continuous

Summary of Tenses

Past Simple

- **Uses:**
 - Completed actions in the past (I visited Paris last year.)
 - Sequential past actions (She woke up, brushed her teeth, and left.)
 - Past habits (We played football every Sunday.)
- **Form:**
 - **Positive:** Subject + past verb (They went home.)
 - **Negative:** Subject + did not (didn't) + base verb (He didn't call me.)
 - **Question:** Did + subject + base verb? (Did you see her?)

Past Continuous (Was/Were + Verb-ing)

- **Uses:**
 - Actions in progress at a specific past time (At 8 PM, I was cooking dinner.)
 - Interrupted actions (I was sleeping when the phone rang.)
 - Parallel actions (While she was reading, he was watching TV.)
- **Form:**
 - **Positive:** Subject + was/were + verb-ing (We were studying.)
 - **Negative:** Subject + was/were not + verb-ing (They weren't listening.)
 - **Question:** Was/Were + subject + verb-ing? (Was it raining?)

Common Mistakes

1. **Using Past Continuous for completed actions**
 - ✗ I was watching a movie last night. (Use Past Simple if the action is finished.)
 - ☑ I watched a movie last night.
2. **Forgetting "was/were" in Past Continuous**
 - ✗ They playing football.
 - ☑ They were playing football.
3. **Mixing the tenses incorrectly**
 - ✗ While I cooked, she was watched TV.
 - ☑ While I was cooking, she was watching TV.

Mixed Exercise (30 Questions)

Part 1: Fill in the blanks with Past Simple or Past Continuous

1. When I _____ (call) her, she _____ (study).
2. They _____ (not/answer) the phone because they _____ (sleep).
3. _____ (you/see) the accident while you _____ (drive)?
4. He _____ (break) his leg when he _____ (ski).
5. We _____ (have) dinner when the lights _____ (go) out.
6. She _____ (not/notice) me because she _____ (text).
7. The kids _____ (play) outside when it _____ (start) raining.
8. _____ (they/visit) Rome when they _____ (travel) in Italy?
9. I _____ (find) my old photos while I _____ (clean) the attic.
10. The teacher _____ (explain) the lesson when the bell _____ (ring).

Part 2: Choose the correct tense

11. When I saw her, she _____ (read / was reading) a book.
12. They _____ (didn't go / weren't going) to the party last night.
13. While we _____ (walked / were walking), it started to snow.
14. She _____ (cooked / was cooking) when the guests arrived.
15. _____ (Did you hear / Were you hearing) that noise last night?

Part 3: Correct the mistakes

16. ✗ I was go to the market yesterday. →

17. ✗ They was watching TV when I called. →

18. ✗ Did she cried during the movie? →

19. ✗ While he cooked, she was read a book. →

20. ✗ We weren't know the answer. →

Part 4: Rewrite the sentences in the opposite tense

21. She wrote a letter. (Past Continuous) →

22. They were swimming in the pool. (Past Simple) →

23. Did you finish your homework? (Past Continuous) →

24. I wasn't listening to music. (Past Simple) →

25. The sun shone brightly. (Past Continuous) →

Part 5: Write your own sentences

26. (Past Simple – Completed action)

27. (Past Continuous – Interrupted action)

28. (Past Simple – Negative)

29. (Past Continuous – Question)

30. (Past Simple – Past habit)

Answer Key

Part 1

1. called, was studying
2. didn't answer, were sleeping
3. Did you see, were driving
4. broke, was skiing
5. were having, went
6. didn't notice, was texting
7. were playing, started
8. Did they visit, were traveling
9. found, was cleaning
10. was explaining, rang

Part 2

11. was reading
12. didn't go
13. were walking
14. was cooking
15. Did you hear

Part 3

16. I went to the market yesterday.
17. They were watching TV when I called.
18. Did she cry during the movie?
19. While he was cooking, she was reading a book.
20. We didn't know the answer.

Part 4

21. She was writing a letter.
22. They swam in the pool.
23. Were you finishing your homework?
24. I didn't listen to music.
25. The sun was shining brightly.

Part 5 (Sample Answers)

- 26. I visited my grandparents last weekend.
- 27. I was walking my dog when it started to rain.
- 28. She didn't like the movie.
- 29. Were you sleeping at 10 PM?
- 30. He always drank coffee in the morning.