

Past Simple or Past Continuous?

Activity Type

Grammar Exercises: categorising, gap-fill, matching, writing sentences from prompts

Focus

Past simple vs. past continuous

Aim

To learn and practice how and when to use the past simple and past continuous.

Preparation

Make one copy of the two-page worksheet for each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

25 minutes

Introduction

This past simple vs. past continuous worksheet helps students learn and practice how and when to use the past continuous, in contrast with the past simple.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

First, students read situations and categorize them based on whether the past simple or past continuous is used.

Exercise A - Answer key

Past simple: b, e, g, i Past continuous: a, c, d, f, h, j

Next, students complete sentences with verbs in brackets in the past simple or past continuous.

Exercise B - Answer key

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. was aching | 5. called | 8. needed |
| 2. was taking | 6. were / doing | 9. was / talking |
| 3. did / got | 7. stopped / got | 10. were planning |
| 4. was getting | | |

Students then match past simple and past continuous sentences with the situations in Exercise A.

Exercise C - Answer key

1. a 2. h 3. e 4. d 5. i 6. f 7. g 8. b 9. c 10. j

After that, students match timelines with the situations in Exercise A. Students then write past simple or past continuous sentences corresponding to the timelines using prompts, adding time adverbs, and other information where appropriate.

Exercise D - Possible answers

1. e Grace went to a football match yesterday.
2. h, i Milo was still cooking dinner when the guests arrived.
3. a Noah was texting his friends for hours last night.
4. g Jacob took three guitar lessons then quit.
5. f Hazel was giving a presentation at 11:00.
6. b Lucy wanted a doll when she was a child.
7. c John was always forgetting his keys.
8. d My daughter, Claire, was growing up so fast!
9. j Kate was planning to go to the library, but her plan changed.

Past Simple or Past Continuous?

A. Do you use the past simple or past continuous in these situations? Write the letter in the correct box below.

- You want to emphasize that an action took some time.
- You want to talk about a state or situation that was true in the past.
- You want to emphasize something happened again and again over time.
- You want to emphasize change or growth over time.
- You want to talk about a one-time completed action or event. The duration isn't important.
- You want to talk about a relatively long action that was ongoing at a particular time.
- You want to talk about a repeated, completed action or event. The duration isn't important.
- You want to talk about a relatively long action that was interrupted by a shorter one.
- You want to talk about a relatively short action or event that happened during a longer one.
- You want to talk about a plan that would have been completed in the past but was changed.

Past simple	Past continuous

B. Complete the sentences in the past simple or continuous using the verbs in brackets.


- Oh man, my back (ache) all day.
- I (take) a shower when the package arrived.
- I (do) my homework after I (get) home from school.
- Her chess game (get) better slowly.
- Sorry, I didn't answer the phone before. I was driving when you (call).
- What you (do) on the night of the murder?
- I often (stop) for tea in the morning before I (get) married.
- I didn't have lunch, so I really (need) something to eat when I got home.
- He always (talk) about his bowling scores, but no one cared.
- We (plan) to buy you a cake for your birthday, but the shop was closed.


C. Match the sentences above with the situations in Exercise A.

- | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. |
| 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. | 10. |

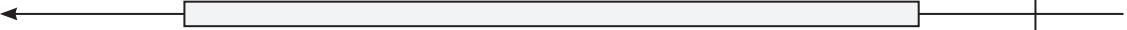
Past Simple or Past Continuous?


D. Match the timelines with the situations in Exercise A. The grey boxes show actions or states that continued for some time. The vertical lines show times or shorter actions. Then, write sentences that correspond to the timelines using the prompts. Add time adverbs and other information where appropriate.

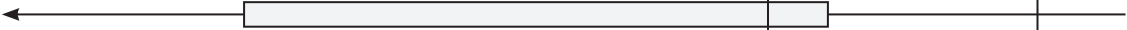
Example: *past* I / wear / costume the girl I like / notice me *now* **Situation**
 ...h...
 *I was wearing a costume when the girl I like noticed me.*


1. *past* Grace / go / football match *now*



2. *past* Milo / cook dinner the guests / arrive *now*



3. *past* Noah / text / friends *now*


4. *past* Jacob / take guitar lessons Jacob / quit *now*


5. *past* Hazel / give a presentation 11:00 *now*


6. *past* Lucy / want / doll / when / child *now*


7. *past* John / forget / keys *now*


8. *past* (My daughter) Claire / grow up / fast *now*


9. *past* Kate / plan / go / library her plan / change *now*
