

Past Continuous Tense

I	was	playing
You We They	were	
He She It	was	

Past continuous tense

I n t e r r o g a t i v e

was	I	playing?
were	you we they	
was	he she it	

N e g a t i v e

I	Was not Wasn't	playing
You We They	were not weren't	
He She It	was not wasn't	

Uses of the past continuous

We use the past continuous tense to describe a past action over a period of time



What were they doing yesterday at 8 o'clock?

They were working all day.

We use the past continuous to say that somebody was in the middle of doing something at a certain time.



This time yesterday the hairdresser **was working**

Past simple and past continuous are used together when something happened in the middle of something else



The policeman **broke** his ankle while he **was running** after the dog

The past simple and the past continuous do not mean exactly the same. Compare:



When Mary arrived, we were having dinner.

This means that we already started dinner before Mary arrived.



When Mary arrived, we had dinner.

This means that Mary arrived first and then we had dinner.

Time expressions:

While, as, when.



While the band was playing a mobile phone rang.

What were Mike and Louise doing yesterday?

	Mike	Louise
8:00	 Mike is sitting at a table eating breakfast. There is a plate of food and a glass of juice on the table.	 Louise is lying in bed, looking out of a window. A lamp is on the bedside table.
10:00	 Mike is playing tennis on a court. He is swinging a racket to hit a ball.	 Louise is pushing a shopping cart full of groceries through a supermarket aisle.
3:00	 Mike is sitting and reading a newspaper.	 Louise is swimming in a pool. Her head and arms are visible above the water.
9:00	 Mike and Louise are dancing together in a room. There are musical notes floating around them and a speaker on the floor.	

Past Continuous (Examples)

Action that was in progress at particular point in the past:



At 2:00 yesterday, Tom was playing soccer.

Sophia wasn't home last night when I called her. I think she was working.

Lisa and her husband were visiting us last week.