

Past Continuous Tense

I

was

You

We

They

were

playing

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	 A cartoon illustration of a boy named Mike sitting at a table, eating breakfast. There is a glass of juice and a plate of food on the table.	 A cartoon illustration of a girl named Louise waking up in bed. A lamp is on the bedside table.
10:00	 A cartoon illustration of Mike playing tennis on a court. He is swinging a racket to hit a ball.	 A cartoon illustration of Louise pushing a shopping cart full of groceries through a supermarket aisle.
3:00	 A cartoon illustration of Mike sitting and reading a newspaper.	 A cartoon illustration of Louise swimming in a pool. There are lily pads in the water.
9:00	 A cartoon illustration of Mike and Louise dancing together. There are musical notes floating around them and a large 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.

