

Rofam Academy Secondary School

English.

Quarter

Individual Assignment.

1

PAST SIMPLE AND PAST CONTINUOUS TENSE

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Date: Nov 4, 2025 G.C

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PAST SIMPLE & PAST CONTINUOUS TENSES

1. PAST SIMPLE TENSE

1.1 Structure

Type	Formula	Example
Affirmative	Subject + Verb (past form / V ₂)	I walked to school.
Negative	Subject + did not (didn't) + base form	I didn't walk to school.
Interrogative	Did + subject + base form	Did you walk to school?

1.2 Verb Forms

Regular verbs: add -ed

walk → walked, study → studied, stop → stopped

Irregular verbs: have unique past forms

go → went, eat → ate, have → had, see → saw

1.3 Core Meaning

The **Past Simple** expresses a **completed action, event, or state** that occurred at a **specific point or period** in the past and **is no longer continuing**.

- I lived in Japan for two years.
→ The action is finished and no longer true now.

1.4 Time Expressions Commonly Used

- **Definite time references:** yesterday, last week, in 2005, two days ago, at 7 o'clock, when I was young
- **Indefinite but past references:** before, once, earlier, long ago, back then

*She called me yesterday.
I met him long ago.*

1.5 Advanced Uses

(a) Sequential Actions (Narrative Use)

Use the past simple to describe a **series of completed actions** in chronological order:

He woke up, brushed his teeth, and left for work.

Each verb moves the story forward → it's like frames in a movie.

(b) Completed States or Habits in the Past

I lived in Rome for five years. (not anymore)

He often visited his grandparents when he was a child.

This shows past **routine or habit** — similar to “used to,” but often interchangeable:

He used to visit his grandparents. = He often visited his grandparents.

(c) Past Truths / Generalizations

People believed the Earth was flat.

→ Expresses what was **considered true** in the past but is **no longer valid**.

(d) Politeness and Hypothetical Distance

Even though grammatically past, it can refer to **present unreal or polite speech**:

I wondered if you could help me.

I wish I knew the answer.

If I had more time, I'd join you.

This "**past for politeness/unreality**" adds distance or softness to the tone.

1.6 Advanced Notes & Subtleties

- The **past simple** does **not** connect directly to the present — it is completely **separated** in time.
 - Using **present perfect** (*I have done*) instead of **past simple** (*I did*) changes the focus:
 - *I have seen that movie* → focuses on experience (still relevant now)
 - *I saw that movie* → focuses on the time in the past (finished moment)
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2. PAST CONTINUOUS TENSE

2.1 Structure

Type	Formula	Example
Affirmative	Subject + was/were + verb-ing	<i>I was reading a book.</i>
Negative	Subject + was/were not + verb-ing	<i>I wasn't reading a book.</i>
Interrogative	Was/Were + subject + verb-ing?	<i>Were you reading a book?</i>

2.2 Core Meaning

The **Past Continuous** describes:

1. **Actions in progress at a specific past moment**
→ *At 8 p.m. last night, I was studying.*
2. **Background actions interrupted by another past action**
→ *I was taking a shower when the phone rang.*
3. **Simultaneous or parallel past actions**
→ *While I was cooking, he was setting the table.*

2.3 Time Expressions

- while, when, as
- at that time, at 8 p.m., all day, all night, all morning
- during the summer, throughout the meeting

2.4 Advanced Uses

(a) Background + Interruption

Combine past continuous (background) + past simple (main action):

I was driving home when I saw the accident.

— “Driving” sets the scene; “saw” marks the main event.

(b) Two Simultaneous Ongoing Actions

While I was reading, she was writing emails.

Both verbs describe continuous, overlapping actions.

(c) Temporary Past Situations

At that time, I was working for a software company.

Implies a **temporary, non-permanent** situation.

(d) Repeated or Annoying Past Actions (with “always”, “constantly”, “forever”)

He was always complaining about the food!

→ Expresses **annoyance, criticism, or exaggeration.**

(e) Politeness & Softening

I was hoping you could help me with this.

→ More polite than “I hope you can help me.”

(f) Scene-Setting in Narratives

Used to **set the atmosphere** or describe surroundings before main events:

The sun was shining, and birds were singing as they arrived.

2.5 Advanced Stylistic Nuances

Style Function	Explanation	Example
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Background description	Gives texture and realism to a story	<i>The crowd was cheering loudly as the team entered.</i>
Interrupted action	One event cuts another off	<i>She was sleeping when the doorbell rang.</i>
Duration emphasis	Focuses on how long something continued	<i>I was waiting for hours!</i>
Repetition (irritation)	“Always” for criticism	<i>You were always losing your keys!</i>

3. PAST SIMPLE vs. PAST CONTINUOUS

Function	Past Simple	Past Continuous
Completed action	<i>I finished the report yesterday.</i>	—
Ongoing action (at time)	—	<i>I was finishing the report at 8 p.m.</i>
Background + main event	<i>The phone rang while I worked.</i> X	<i>The phone rang while I was working.</i> ✓
Sequence of events	<i>He entered, turned on the light, and sat down.</i>	—
Simultaneous actions	—	<i>She was cooking while I was cleaning.</i>
Temporary state	—	<i>I was staying at my cousin's that week.</i>
Habitual action	<i>I visited them every Sunday.</i>	<i>He was always visiting uninvited! (complaint)</i>

4. Common Advanced Mistakes

✗ Wrong	✓ Correct	Explanation
<i>I was seeing her yesterday.</i>	<i>I saw her yesterday.</i>	“See” = perception verb, not used in continuous for single action.
<i>When I was arrived, she was leaving.</i>	<i>When I arrived, she was leaving.</i>	Use simple past for completed arrival.
<i>While I watched TV, she was cooking.</i>	<i>While I was watching TV, she was cooking.</i>	Both actions should be continuous if simultaneous.
<i>I was knowing the answer.</i>	<i>I knew the answer.</i>	“Know” is a stative verb (not continuous).

5. Stative Verbs and Continuous Forms

Certain verbs express **states** rather than **actions** — and are **not usually used** in continuous tenses:

know, understand, believe, like, love, hate, seem, belong, prefer, need, mean, remember, own

 *I was knowing him for years.*

 *I knew him for years.*

However, some stative verbs can appear in continuous forms when emphasizing **temporary or changing situations**:

I was thinking about what you said.

She's loving her new job. (modern informal English)

6. Combined Usage in Storytelling (Advanced Narrative Flow)

It was raining heavily (past continuous) when I left the office (past simple). I was hurrying (past continuous) to the bus stop when a car splashed water all over me (past simple). Everyone was laughing (past continuous), but I just smiled (past simple).

 **Effect:** Creates rhythm → continuous actions build the scene; simple verbs punctuate key moments.

7. Advanced Sentence Building

1. Complex sentences

While we were discussing the proposal, the manager suddenly interrupted and changed the topic.

2. Reported speech

Direct: *She said, "I am tired."*

Reported: *She said she was tired.*

(Present → Past Simple; Past Continuous remains the same.)

3. Time clauses

When I got home, she was still working.

(The “when” clause often uses **past simple**, while the other uses **past continuous**.)

4. Emphasis on duration

I was studying all night before the exam.

8. Practice Tip (Advanced Awareness)

- Ask:
 - Was the action finished? → **Past Simple**
 - Was the action in progress? → **Past Continuous**
 - Was background or main event? → **Continuous (background) vs Simple (main)**