



Talking About an Action in Progress in the Past

How do we describe something that was **happening** over a period of time yesterday, last week, or last year? We use a special tool called the Past Continuous Tense. It helps us paint a picture of an ongoing scene from the past.

The Core Formula is Simple and Consistent

To form the Past Continuous Tense, you only need two key ingredients. This formula works for almost every situation.

[**was / were**] + [**verb-ing**]

This formula is our anchor. You'll see it on every slide to help you remember.

First, Let's Choose Between 'was' and 'were'

The choice depends on the subject of the sentence. The rule is straightforward.

Use **was**

For singular subjects:

I
she
he
it

Use **were**

For plural subjects:

we
you
they

Let's See How It Works: Positive Statements

We can describe what someone was doing at a specific time in the past. Let's imagine yesterday evening.

She **was cooking dinner.**

She (**was**) + cook(**ing**)



The Same Formula Works for Plural Subjects

Meanwhile, other people were busy with
their own activities.

They **were watching
a movie.**

They (**were**) + watch(**ing**)



A Snapshot of a Moment in the Past

Using the Past Continuous, we can see what everyone was doing.



She was cooking dinner.



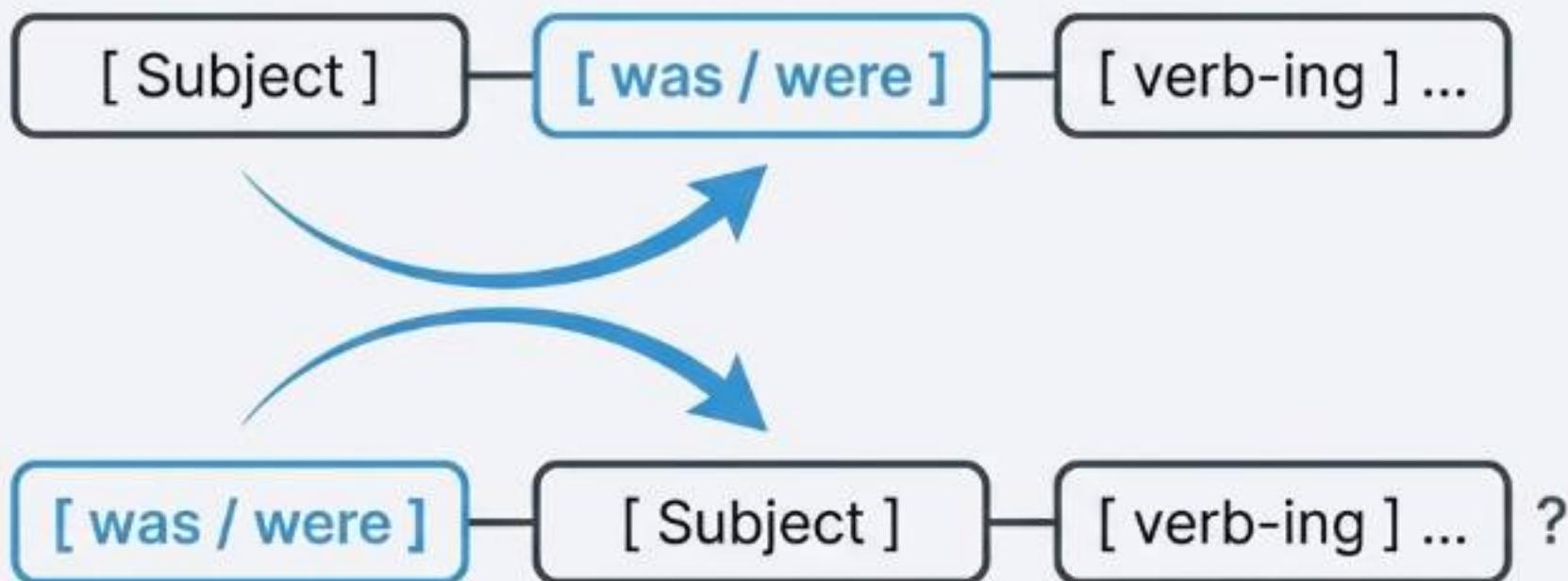
They were watching a movie.



I was studying.

To Ask a Question, Simply Swap the Order

To turn a statement into a question, the subject and the verb (**was or were**) trade places. No new words are needed.



Putting Our Characters into Question Form

Let's see what our sentences look like as questions.

- ? **Was** she cooking dinner?
- ? **Were** they watching a movie?
- ? **Was** I studying?

To Make it Negative, Just Add “not”

To say something was *not* happening, place the word ‘not’ directly after ‘was’ or ‘were’.

[was / were] + [not] + [verb-ing]



You can also use contractions: ‘wasn’t’ or ‘weren’t’.

Showing What Was Not Happening

Using our new rule, we can clarify the scene.



She **was not** (wasn't)
cooking dinner.



They **were not** (weren't)
watching a movie.

Check Your Understanding

Complete the sentence below using the Past Continuous Tense.

Yesterday at 4 PM...



He _____ in the park. (run)

Answer: was running.

The Full Picture: Statement, Question, and Negative

All three forms use the same core components. Notice how the pieces move and adapt.



Positive

They **were watching** a movie.



Question

Were they **watching** a movie?



Negative

They **were not watching** a movie.

Remember: Use This for Actions Happening in the Past

Whenever you want to describe a background scene, an interruption, or an action that was in progress over time in the past, the Past Continuous is your tool.



was / were + verb-ing

You've got it! 🎉