

# Simple Past vs. Past Continuous

## Simple Past

We use the **simple past** to talk about:

**Completed** actions, **habits** and **facts** in the past.



- I **went** to the cinema **yesterday**.
- I **always visited** my grandparents in my summer holidays **when I was little**.
- I **lived** near Liverpool for a couple of years.

## Past Continuous

The **past continuous** is used to express:

**Interrupted** actions, **specific time** as an **interruption** and **parallel** actions.



- I **was watching** TV **when** the phone rang.
- **Last night at 7pm**, I **was having** dinner.  
**While** she **was doing** her homework her brother **was playing** football.

Complete the sentences with past simple or continuous

- We (cycle) when the rain (start).
- He (break) the vase while he (play) ball at home.
- My mum (come) in while I (surf) on the net.
- The electricity (go off) as I (bake) a cake.
- Sandra (catch) when her sister (fall) down the stairs.
- I (play) golf when it (begin) to rain.
- While she (read) a novel, her sister (turn on) the CD player.
- They (walk) along the beach when they (see) the accident.
- We (study) when we (hear) a terrible noise.
- While she (do) the ironing, her husband (set) the table.
- We (dance) when he (faint).
- When he (fall) down the tree, he (break) his leg.
- I (be) shocked when I (hear) the bad news.
- She (cry) when I (see) her.
- My parents (sit) in the garden while we (play) badminton.
- (swim) in the sea at 6.00 am?
- Bob (lie) in the garden when it (start) to rain.
- As I (put) the baby to bed, the phone (ring).
- What you (do) when Dan (fall)?
- How you (break) the window?
- I (write) an e-mail when the postman (deliver) his letter!
- When I (leave) home yesterday, some dogs (sit) near the front gate.
- John (not swim) at four o'clock. He (play) football.
- While I (swim) in the river, I (see) some frogs.
- Jim (not pay) attention when he (drive) his car into a tree.
- What you (do) while she (sleep)?
- Everyone (sleep) when the robbers (break in).
- We (arrive) at the station just as the train (leave).

## Complete the sentences with *while* or *when*.

1. We were playing basketball \_\_\_\_\_ it began to rain.
2. The dog was barking \_\_\_\_\_ we were sleeping.
3. I was watching TV \_\_\_\_\_ she called.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ the phone rang, she was writing a letter.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ we were having the picnic, it started to rain.
6. What were you doing \_\_\_\_\_ the earthquake started?
7. You were not listening to me \_\_\_\_\_ I told you to turn the oven off.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ John was sleeping last night, someone stole his car.
9. I was just getting into the bath \_\_\_\_\_ the telephone rang.
10. Were you listening \_\_\_\_\_ he was talking?
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Ellen was reading, Tim was watching television.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ she came home from school she really didn't look well

## Complete the text with past simple or past continuous

A lorry driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(drive)** 200 penguins to London Zoo when his lorry \_\_\_\_\_ **(break)** down on the motorway. The driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(get)** out of the cab and \_\_\_\_\_ **(look)** at the engine when a second lorry driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(stop)** in front of him and \_\_\_\_\_ **(ask)** if he \_\_\_\_\_ **(need)** help.

The penguins' driver \_\_\_\_\_ **(explain)** that he \_\_\_\_\_ **(take)** the penguins to the zoo and \_\_\_\_\_ **(ask)** if the other man would take the penguins there. He \_\_\_\_\_ **(agreed)**.



Today \_\_\_\_\_ **(not be)** not a good day. First of all, my alarm clock \_\_\_\_\_ **(not ring)**. Then, while I \_\_\_\_\_ **(have)** a shower, my dad \_\_\_\_\_ **(go)** to work so I had to walk to school. It \_\_\_\_\_ **(rain)** and I got very wet. When I \_\_\_\_\_ **(walk)** into class everyone \_\_\_\_\_ **(study)** hard and in silence. The teacher \_\_\_\_\_ **(look)** at me and said, 'Good afternoon John. How nice of you to join us.' Everyone \_\_\_\_\_ **(laugh)**. I \_\_\_\_\_ **(be)** so embarrassed.