

Past simple versus past continuous

GRAMMAR

LEVEL
Intermediate

NUMBER
EN_BE_2537G

LANGUAGE
English

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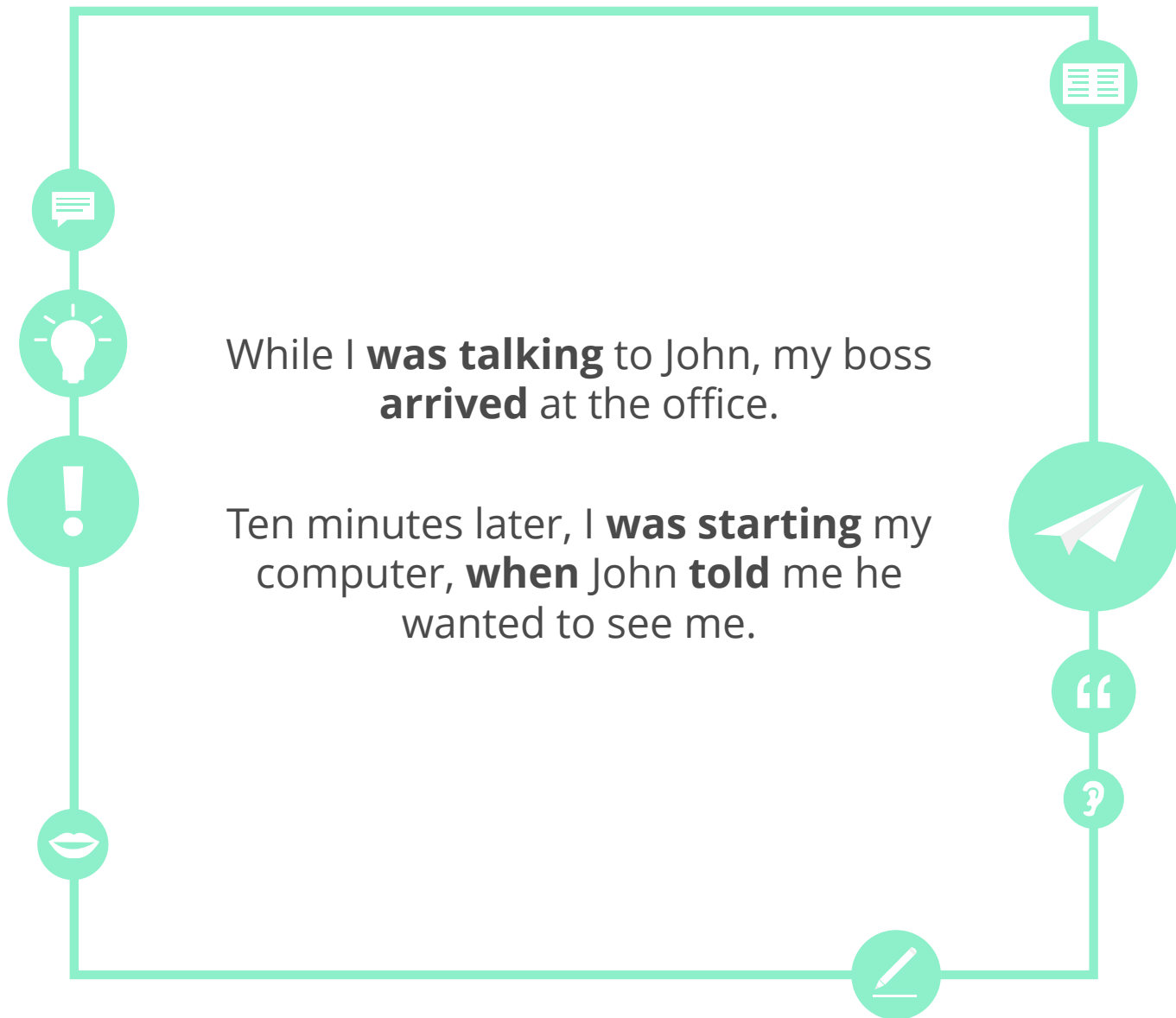




Goals

- Can correctly identify the difference between the past simple and the past continuous.
- Can use the past continuous and determine when to use the particles 'when' and 'while'.







Preview and warm-up

In this lesson, you are going to learn about the **past simple** and the **past continuous**.



Climate change **was happening** when they **found** a solution.



Past simple review

- We use the **past simple** to talk about **finished actions** in the past.

■ I **wrote** an article about global warming yesterday.

■ John **bought** solar panels last year.

■ They **asked** about greenhouse gas emissions.

- We use the **same form** of the verbs with each subject.



Past simple review

- Verbs can be either **regular** or **irregular** in the past simple.
- Add **-(e)d** to regular verbs.
- Irregular verbs must be learnt by heart.

infinitive	regular verbs	infinitive	irregular verbs
play	played	buy	bought
ask	asked	eat	ate
finish	finished	teach	taught
visit	visited	write	wrote



Irregular verbs



- Irregular verbs have the same form in the past simple.
 - There is one exception.
 - The verb **to be** changes depending on the subject:
 - I/he/she/it **was**
 - We/you/they **were**

was	were
I was excited about my new water bottle.	You were tired of plastic pollution.
She was happy to fight climate change.	They were sad to see the contaminated ocean.



Categorise

Are these verbs regular or irregular in the past simple? Group them.

recycle

fight

go

offer

promote

read

change

see

regular verbs

irregular verbs



Transform the sentences

1. We need a green expert's help.

→ We **needed** a green expert's help.

2. My office uses eco-friendly materials.

→ _____

3. She promotes a plastic-free lifestyle.

→ _____

4. You recycle old laptops.

→ _____

5. They offer free bikes.

→ _____



Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with irregular verbs.

read

go

understand

fight

teach

1. They _____ against climate change.
2. She _____ the team about renewable energy.
3. You _____ about the climate crisis.
4. Charles _____ to the green shop.
5. My manager _____ the importance of having a green team.





Past continuous

- We use the **past continuous** to describe a **progressing action** at a certain time in the past.
- We form the past continuous using **was/were + -ing form** of the verb.

past continuous

I was looking for renewable energy options.

He was learning about nuclear energy.

We were using fossil fuels.

You were taking responsible steps.

They were talking about global warming.





Negatives and questions

- We form **negatives** by adding **not** to **was/were**.
- We often contract these to: **was not = wasn't** or **were not = weren't**.

■ He **wasn't learning** about nuclear energy.

■ We **weren't using** fossil fuels.

■ **Was he learning** about nuclear energy?

■ **Were you using** fossil fuels?

■ **Why** was he learning about nuclear energy?

■ **When** were you using fossil fuels?

- Form **yes-no questions** by inverting **was/were** and the **subject**.
- Form **WH-questions** by then also putting **question words at the beginning** of the sentence.



Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences in the past continuous.

1. The company _____ (not/use) renewable energy.
2. Michael _____ (buy)reusable cutlery.
3. They _____ (not/watch) a documentary on global warming.
4. Greta Thunberg _____ (give) a speech at the climate conference.
5. We _____ (produce) 37 million tons of CO2 in 2018.



Look at the pictures.

Say what they were doing differently in the past compared to today.



solar panels



nuclear energy



plastic bottle



cars



What were you doing?

Ask your classmates or your teacher. What were they doing differently in the past?





Past simple versus past continuous

- While we use the **past simple** for **finished actions**, the **past continuous** describes an action that was **in progress in the past**.

- We **used** renewable energy. (We don't use it now, it is finished.)
- We **were using** renewable energy in 2017. (We are talking about something that happened continuously in a certain time.)



Past simple versus past continuous

- We can use the **past simple** and the **past continuous** in the **same sentence**.
- In this case, the **past continuous** gives the **background** situation and the **past simple** describes an **individual action** that **interrupts** the continuous situation.
- In these sentences, we use **while** with **the past continuous** and **when** with **the past simple**.

Past continuous	Past simple
While we were travelling by boat	we saw wind turbines.
While they were having a meeting	we bought an electric car.
She was standing in front of the door	when the solar panels arrived.
The sun was shining	when suddenly it started to rain.





Categorise

Past simple or past continuous?

We asked
questions from
the green expert.

They were taking
actions for the
planet.

The ice was
melting.

Tom and Wayne
ordered solar
panels.



Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences with the past simple or the past continuous form of the verbs.

1. I _____ (start) a new project yesterday.

2. What _____ (do/Tom) at around 7 o'clock in the morning?

3. He _____ (listen) to loud music when I arrived.

4. _____ (find) what you were looking for in the green shop?

5. I was reading my emails, when I _____ (hear) the noise.



Finish the sentences

What happened? Finish the following sentences!

1. They were turning off the lights when...
2. My colleague was asking for more information, when...
3. When Sue and Anne bought green products, ...
4. Tony was trying out his bamboo toothbrush when ...
5. When I got the job,



Speaking

What were you doing yesterday at...



8:30 am

13:00 pm



17:45 pm

19:30 pm



Speaking

Complete the previous sentences. What happened while you were doing something at...



8:30 am

13:00 pm

17:45 pm

19:30 pm



Writing

Put the sentences in the right order to start a story.

He was driving to work when he saw a tree in the middle of the road.

John was dreaming about a plastic free-planet when his alarm went off.

He had a quick breakfast.

A notebook page with horizontal lines and circular icons for writing. The icons include a pencil, a speech bubble, a lightbulb, a magnifying glass, a checkmark, and a trash can. The page is designed for organizing thoughts and writing a story.



Speaking

How would you continue the story? Say at least three sentences. Use the past simple and the past continuous when telling the story.



John was dreaming about a plastic free-planet when his alarm went off.

He had a quick breakfast.

He was driving to work when he saw a tree in the middle of the road.



Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

no





Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



If you have time, go over
the most difficult slides again



Answer key

Exercise 1, p.8

Regular verbs: recycle, promote, change, offer
Irregular verbs: fight, go, read, see

Exercise 2, p.9

1. My office used eco-friendly materials.
2. She promoted plastic-free lifestyle.
3. You recycled old laptops.
4. SThey offered free bikes.

Exercise 3, p.10

1. fought
2. taught
3. read
4. went
5. understood

Exercise 4, p.13

1. were not using
2. was buying
3. were not watching
4. was giving a speech
5. were producing



Answer key

Exercise 7, p. 23

John was dreaming about a plastic free-planet when his alarm went off. He had a quick breakfast. He was driving to work when he saw a tree in the middle of the road.

1. started
2. was Tom doing
3. was listening
4. Did you find
5. heard

Exercise 6, p.19

(These are suggestions)
They were using solar panels/nuclear energy/drinking from plastic bottles/always travelling by car.

Exercise 5, p.14





Find the mistake

Find the mistake and correct the sentence.

1. I were using my laptop when I caught a cold.
2. We were talking to Jeff while the phone rang.
3. Alex gone to the office, while I was shopping.
4. I was cleaning my desk, when the green expert was arriving.
5. We using solar panels when the crisis started.



Homework writing activity

Write sentences about your job. What were you doing at work when something happened?

<input type="radio"/>	I was finishing my project when my colleague brought me a cup
<input type="radio"/>	of coffee.
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Homework answer key

Exercise 1, p.31

1. I **was** using my laptop when I caught a cold.
2. We were talking to Jeff **when** the phone rang.
3. Alex **went** to the office, while I was shopping.
4. I was cleaning my desk, when the green expert **arrived**.
5. We **were** using solar panels when the crisis started.



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