

GRAMMAR

Past simple and past continuous

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_2042G

LANGUAGE

English



Learning outcomes

- I can identify the past simple and past continuous and explain when to use each tense.
- I can use 'when' and 'while' to link clauses in the past simple and past continuous.



Warm-up

Match the words to their definitions, then **complete the activity** in the yellow box.



1 to **explode**

2 an **eel**

3 a **canyon**

4 a **boulder**

5 to **trap**

a a long, thin fish that looks like a snake

b to make someone or something stuck

c a large rock

d to break apart suddenly and violently

e a deep, narrow valley

These words come from the text on the next slide about **three miraculous survival stories**.
Take 30 seconds to make some predictions about the text. Be as creative as you like!

Reading

Read the **texts** below. Were any of your predictions correct?

Miraculous survival stories



1. On Christmas Eve, in 1971, Juliane Koepke was flying over the Peruvian rainforest when lightning struck the plane and it exploded in mid-air. She fell 3 km to the forest below. Miraculously, she only had a broken collarbone and some cuts.



2. In 2014, Tseng Lien-Fa was fishing for eels on a beach in Taiwan when a large wave suddenly pulled him out into deep water. He survived 60 hours at sea by holding onto a piece of wood. He was able to stay afloat and was carried to a beach 75 km away.



3. While Aron Ralston was climbing down a canyon in Utah in May 2003, a boulder fell and trapped his arm. Nobody knew where he was, so he made a difficult decision: he cut off his arm to free himself. He walked 13 km through the desert before hikers rescued him.



He was able **to stay afloat** by holding onto a piece of wood.

Do you know the difference between *to float* and *to swim*?

What do you think the highlighted phrase means?



Match the information to the story

Match a statement on the left to the correct story.

- 1 These events happened in 1971.
- 2 Someone survived 60 hours at sea by holding onto a piece of wood.
- 3 Someone was trapped in a canyon in the desert in Utah.
- 4 These events happened in Taiwan in 2014.
- 5 This miraculous survival story happened in South America.
- 6 Someone was rescued by hikers.

Story 1

Story 2

Story 3

Past simple and past continuous

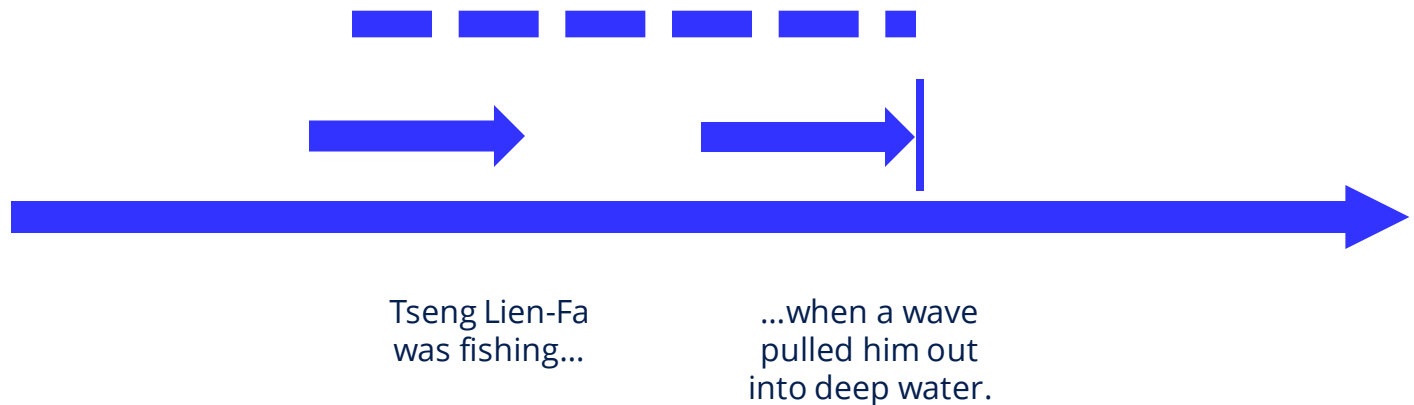
Read the **example sentence** from the text and **complete the blue box**.

Tseng Lien-Fa **was fishing** when a wave **pulled** him **out** into deep water.

- Look at the highlighted verbs in this sentence, which **describe two past actions**.
- Which verb is in the past simple? Which verb is in the past continuous? How can you tell?

Past simple and past continuous

Look at the timeline and answer the questions in the blue box.



- Which tense is used to describe **an ongoing or longer action** in the past?
- Which tense is used to describe **an action that interrupts an ongoing action** in the past?

Past simple and past continuous

Here are two of the stories again. **Read** them and **answer the questions** in the red boxes.

On Christmas Eve, in 1971, Juliane Koepke was flying over the Peruvian rainforest when lightning struck the plane and it exploded in mid-air. She fell 3 km to the forest below. Miraculously, she only had a broken collarbone and some cuts.

While Aron Ralston was climbing down a canyon in Utah in May 2003, a boulder fell and trapped his arm. Nobody knew where he was, so he made a difficult decision: he cut off his arm to free himself. He walked 13 km through the desert before hikers rescued him.

Find two more sentences that use the past simple and past continuous together.

In each sentence, **identify** the **longer/ongoing action** and the **action that interrupts** it.

In each sentence, **what word is used to link the two past actions?** *Hint: it's not in the same position in each sentence*

Past simple and past continuous

Read the **example sentences** from the text again and **complete the rules** in the blue boxes.

Juliane Koepcke was flying over the rainforest when lightning struck her plane.

While Aron Ralston was climbing down a canyon, a boulder fell and trapped his arm.

- We use the **past simple** and **past continuous** together to describe two past actions.
- _____: a longer or ongoing action in the past.
- _____: a shorter action in the past that happened during the longer action or interrupted it.

- We use the words _____ and _____ **to link clauses** in the past continuous and past simple.
- _____ is used at the start of the past continuous clause.
- _____ is used at the start of the past simple clause.



Complete the sentences

Match the sentence beginnings with the correct endings.

1 While Joanna was watching a horror movie,

2 I was out walking my dog,

3 A farmer was working in his field one evening,

4 While Tim was cycling to work the other morning

5 I was cooking a roast dinner

a when I heard thunder, and I had to run back to the house.

b he saw his boss coming home from a party.

c when you rang, and then I forgot to take the chicken out of the oven!

d when he discovered an ancient clay pot buried in the earth.

e someone knocked at the window, and she got a fright.



Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps using either **past simple** or **past continuous**.

- 1 While the hikers _____ (**walk**) through the desert, they _____ (**see**) a man who looked like he needed help.
- 2 People _____ (**board**) the plane when I _____ (**arrive**) at the gate. I almost missed my flight!
- 3 Sarah _____ (**drive**) on the motorway when her car _____ (**break down**) and she _____ (**have to**) call for help.
- 4 The family _____ (**enjoy**) a picnic on the riverbank when it _____ (**start**) raining.
- 5 While I _____ (**run**), I fell and _____ (**hurt**) my ankle. A woman _____ (**pass**) on her way home, and she _____ (**stop**) and took me to hospital.



Build sentences using the pictures

Complete this activity **in breakout rooms** or **in the main class**.

If using breakout rooms, **share** your sentences with the rest of the group afterwards.

*I (past continuous)...,
when (past simple)...*

*While I (past continuous)... (past
simple) ...*

3



1



4



2



5





End of the lesson

Idiom

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger

Meaning: when you go through something difficult or challenging, the experience makes you a stronger person.

Example: When someone tells you about a very challenging experience they have had, or when you are talking about your own challenges, you can use this phrase.



Additional practice



Discuss

Try to **use the past simple and past continuous!**

**Have you ever been in a dangerous situation?
What were you doing?
What happened?**



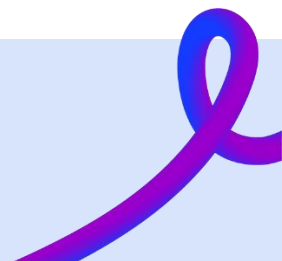
When was the last time something unexpected happened to you while you were travelling somewhere?



Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps using the past continuous and past simple.

- 1 I _____ (meet) Alex while I _____ (travel) in New Zealand.
- 2 It _____ (start) to rain while Ben _____ (working) in the garden.
- 3 You _____ (not listen) to me when I _____ (tell) you the plan for Sunday.
- 4 Tom _____ (break) a plate while he _____ (wash) the dishes.
- 5 Maria _____ (read) in bed when she _____ (hear) a loud crash downstairs.





What were you doing?

Think about an **important moment** in your life or something that **you remember happening very clearly**. What were you were doing when it happened? Tell your classmates.



I was gardening when my partner asked me to marry him. I was very surprised!

I was fishing when my wife called me to tell me she was pregnant.

I was eating pizza when I found out I got my dream job.



Reflect on the text

Why do you think the stories you read in the lesson are described as *miraculous*?

Which of the survival stories was the most surprising, in your opinion?



Match the sentences

Match the sentence beginnings with their endings.

1 I was trekking in the rainforest when...

2 Lightning struck a tree 100 metres away from me...

3 Celia was trying to stay afloat while...

4 Pete ate all his popcorn...

5 I told you about the test three weeks ago but...

a while I was playing golf one Sunday.

b you weren't listening to me.

c while the trailers were playing and he had nothing left for during the film.

d I saw a large gorilla right in front of me.

e she was trapped under her canoe in the river.



Writing

Look at the pictures below and **complete the writing activity** in the red box.

Write a short text (2-3 lines) for each picture using the **past simple** and the **past continuous** and ***when or while***.

What was happening? Then what happened?



Answer key

P.3: 1. (d) 2. (a) 3. (e) 4. (c) 5. (b)

P.6: Story 1: 1, 5 Story 2: 2, 4 Story 3: 3, 6

P.7: First action: Tseng Lien-Fa was fishing; second action: a wave pulled him out into the water

P.8: 1. past continuous 2. past simple

P. 9:

On Christmas Eve, in 1971, Juliane Koepke was flying (*longer action*) over the Peruvian rainforest when lightning struck the plane (*action that interrupts*) and it exploded (*action that interrupts*) in mid-air.

While Aron Ralston was climbing (*longer action*) down a canyon in Utah in May 2003, a boulder fell (*action that interrupts*) and trapped (*action that interrupts*) his arm.

when and *while* are used to link the two past actions



Answer key

P.10: 1. past continuous 2. past simple 3. when; while 4. while; when

P.11: 1. (e) 2. (a) 3. (d) 4. (b) 5. (c)

P.12: 1. were walking; they saw 2. were boarding; arrived 3. was driving; broke down
4. were enjoying; started 5. was running; hurt; was passing; stopped

Additional practice:

P.18: 1. met; was travelling 2. started; was working 3. were not listening; told 4. broke was
washing 5. was reading; heard

P.21: 1. (d) 2. (a) 3. (e) 4. (c) 5. (b)



Summary

Using the past continuous and past simple

- We use these tenses together to describe two past actions, using the linking words **when** and **while**
- **Past continuous:** a longer or ongoing action in the past.
- **Past simple:** a shorter action in the past that happened during the longer action or interrupted it.

when and while

- *while* is used at the start of the past continuous clause
- *when* is used at the start of the past simple clause



Vocabulary

to survive

survival

rainforest

to explode

lightning

eel

to rescue

canyon

boulder

to stay afloat

to trap

miraculous

