The word "was" is used as a past tense form of the verb "to be" and is commonly used in several conditions:

**1. Past Continuous Tense**

* **Usage:** To describe an action that was ongoing at a specific time in the past.
* **Structure:** Subject + was/were + verb-ing
* **Example:** "I was reading a book when you called."
* **Explanation:** The action of reading was happening continuously at the time you called.

**2. Passive Voice (Past Tense)**

* **Usage:** To describe an action that was done to the subject by someone or something else in the past.
* **Structure:** Subject + was/were + past participle
* **Example:** "The cake was baked by my mother."
* **Explanation:** The action of baking was performed by someone (the mother), and the focus is on the cake being baked.

**3. Past State or Condition**

* **Usage:** To describe a state of being or condition in the past.
* **Structure:** Subject + was/were + noun/adjective/prepositional phrase
* **Example:** "She was happy yesterday."
* **Explanation:** "Was" is used to describe how she felt (happy) in the past.

**4. Used with Adjectives to Describe a Past Condition**

* **Usage:** To describe a condition or characteristic of someone or something in the past.
* **Structure:** Subject + was/were + adjective
* **Example:** "The weather was cold last night."
* **Explanation:** "Was" is used to describe the past condition of the weather being cold.

**Examples to Illustrate These Conditions:**

* **Past Continuous:** "I was studying when the power went out."
* **Passive Voice:** "The letter was written by her."
* **Past State:** "He was a teacher before he retired."
* **Adjective for Past Condition:** "The room was quiet during the meeting."

**When Not to Use "Was":**

* Do not use "was" with verbs that are already in the past tense (e.g., "was went" is incorrect; the correct form is simply "went").
* Avoid "was" with verbs in simple past tense, as it creates incorrect structures (e.g., "was woke up" should just be "woke up").

Understanding the correct use of "was" can help in constructing grammatically accurate sentences in English.