

A decorative graphic featuring several overlapping pink circles of varying sizes and shades, connected by thin pink lines. The circles are arranged in a way that suggests movement or a path. The lines are thin and extend across the page, creating a sense of depth and connection between the circles.

# Past SIMPLE & Past CONTINUOUS EXERCISES

The following document is a brief description and a series of exercises for practicing the past simple and the past continuous in order to improve your knowledge of those grammar points.

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**19/05/2011**

# Past Simple and Past Continuous

## The past simple is used:

✚ For an action that started and ended in the past.

\*I saw a ghost last Friday.

✚ For a repeated action in the past.

\*When I was young, I watched lots of television every day after school.\*

\*I always gave my mother flowers on her birthday.

\*(We could also say, I used to watch lots of television.)

✚ For stative verbs, which are verbs that do not express an action, but a state of mind or being, e.g. **have (own), be, think (believe), know, dislike, need, owe, understand, wish.**

\*He had a small cottage in the woods.

\*He wasn't afraid of ghosts.

✚ Regular past simple tense verbs end in **-ed**.

\*I talked to my uncle yesterday.

\*I phoned my girlfriend this morning.

✚ Irregular past simple tense verbs do not end in **-ed**.

\*You need to learn irregular past tense verbs.

\*I felt sick yesterday morning so I went to the doctor.

## The past continuous tense is used:

✚ When talking about TWO actions in the past; one continues for a period, and the other starts and ends (past simple).

\*While I was talking on the phone, someone stole my car.

\*I was making breakfast when the cat knocked over the milk carton, so I burnt the toast.

✚ These sentences usually use **while** or **when**.

✚ To talk about TWO actions in the past, both happening over a period.

\*I was working on my computer and my children were watching television.

✚ To talk about a TEMPORARY activity taking place over a limited time.

The past continuous tense is **was / were + the present participle**.

\*I was living in Indooroopilly when it happened.

\*I was staying at my friend's house while my parents were touring Italy.

(The present participle is the base of a **verb + ing** i.e. walk walking).



*EXERCISES*

*PAST SIMPLE*

*&*

*PAST CONTINUOUS*





## Activity 1

**Choose which verb tense (simple past or past continuous) fits better.**

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ - I didn't hear you come in.  
a) was sleeping b) slept
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ to see her twice, but she wasn't home.  
a) was coming b) came
3. What \_\_\_\_\_? I was watching TV.  
a) did you do b) were you doing
4. Robin Hood was a character who \_\_\_\_\_ from the rich and gave to the poor.  
a) stole b) was stealing
5. Hey, did you talk to her? Yes, I \_\_\_\_\_ to her  
a) was talking b) talked
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ home very late last night.  
a) came b) was coming
7. How long \_\_\_\_\_ the flu?  
a) did you have b) were you having
8. \_\_\_\_\_ a good time in Brazil? Yes, I had a blast!  
a) Were you having b) Did you have
9. We \_\_\_\_\_ breakfast when she walked into the room.  
a) had b) were having
10. Last month I decided to buy a new car, and today I finally \_\_\_\_\_ it.  
a) bought b) was buying



## Activity 2

**Read the story and answer the following questions.**

### A DISASTROUS DINNER

Last Friday, Mrs. Anderson planned to have a delicious dinner. She bought a T-bone steak and some cream and apples for an apple pie. When she came home from the shops she put her shopping on the table. While she was setting the table, her two pets sat underneath it and watched her. Then she went to the kitchen to make the pastry for the pie. She was a little forgetful so she didn't realize the steak, cream and apples were still on the table. While she was making the pastry, the dog jumped on a chair and looked longingly at the steak. At last it took the steak in its mouth and jumped off the chair, just as Mrs. Anderson was coming back into the dining room. Mrs. Anderson screamed, but the dog ran into the garden. She ran after the dog. While she was chasing the dog, the cat jumped on the table and started drinking the cream. Mrs. Anderson didn't manage to catch the dog, and she came back into the dining room. When she saw the cat, she shrieked, and the cat got such a fright that it jumped a meter into the air, and leapt out the window. Mrs. Anderson threw her broom at the cat, but she missed, and broke the window. At the same time she overbalanced and put her hand in the cream, spilling it all over the tablecloth. Poor Mrs. Anderson - she had no dinner, only a dirty tablecloth and a broken window.

**Glossary:** **set the table** - put knives and forks, plates, salt etc. on the table., **underneath** - under it., **longingly** - e.g. the dog wanted it but knew it couldn't have it., **shriek** - louder than scream., **get a fright** - suddenly (not the same as be frightened)., **overbalance** - to lose your balance and fall.

**Answer these questions about the story. Answer in complete sentences.**

1. What did Mrs. Anderson plan?
2. Why did she buy cream and apples?
3. When did her pets watch her?
4. Where did she leave the steak?
5. When did the dog jump on the chair?
6. How did the dog look at the steak?
7. When did the dog jump off the chair?
8. Where did the dog go?
9. What was she doing when the cat jumped on the table?
10. What did Mrs. Anderson do when she saw the cat?

### Activity 3

Complete the following sentences with the correct form (Past Simple or Past Continuous).

1. A: What (you, do) \_\_\_\_\_ when you heard that noise?  
B: I (try) \_\_\_\_\_ to change a light bulb that had burnt out.
2. After I (find) \_\_\_\_\_ the wallet full of money, I (go, immediately) \_\_\_\_\_ to the police and (turn) \_\_\_\_\_ it in.
3. The doctor (say) \_\_\_\_\_ that Brian (be) \_\_\_\_\_ too weak to go to work and that he (need) \_\_\_\_\_ to stay at home for a couple of days.
4. My best friend (arrive) \_\_\_\_\_ at my house a little before 9:00 pm, but I (be, not) \_\_\_\_\_ there. I (study) \_\_\_\_\_ at the library for my final examination in Italian.
5. John is in the living room working on his computer. At this time yesterday, he (work, also) \_\_\_\_\_ on his computer. That's all he ever does!
6. I (call) \_\_\_\_\_ you last night after dinner, but you (be, not) \_\_\_\_\_ there. Where were you?  
B: I (work) \_\_\_\_\_ out at the gym.
7. When I (walk) \_\_\_\_\_ into the busy office, the secretaries (talk) \_\_\_\_\_ on the phone with customers, a clerk (work, busily) \_\_\_\_\_ at his desk, and two managers (discuss, quietly) \_\_\_\_\_ methods to improve customer service.
8. I (watch) \_\_\_\_\_ a thriller on T.V. when the electricity went out. Now I am never going to find out how the film ends.
9. Samantha (be) \_\_\_\_\_ in the room when Bob (tell) \_\_\_\_\_ me what happened, but she didn't hear anything because she (be, listen) \_\_\_\_\_ to music.
10. It's strange that you (call) \_\_\_\_\_ because I (think, just) \_\_\_\_\_ about you.

## Activity 4

Find the Past Simple of the following verbs:

Work _____	come _____
Walk _____	speak _____
Talk _____	see _____
Clean _____	do _____
Live _____	go _____
Wash _____	sing _____

Complete what Jenny says using the following verbs in the Past Continuous:

Jenny is telling her teacher why she couldn't study for an exam.

**watch   listen   sing   clean   cook   play   lie**

It was impossible for me to concentrate! I went to my bedroom and my mother \_\_\_\_\_ the carpet with the vacuum cleaner. Then I went to the living room but my brother Paul \_\_\_\_\_ on the sofa. He \_\_\_\_\_ his guitar. After that I decided to go to the kitchen.

There, my grandmother \_\_\_\_\_ and she \_\_\_\_\_ also \_\_\_\_\_ TV. Finally, I went out to the garden where I found my sister. She \_\_\_\_\_ to her Walkman and she \_\_\_\_\_ at the top of her voice.

## Activity 5

**Write the correct form of the verb, using the Past Simple or the Past Continuous tense.**

A: I \_\_\_\_\_ (see) Peter and John in the park on Sunday.

B: \_\_\_\_\_ (they/play) football?

They always play football on Sundays.

A: No, they \_\_\_\_\_ (not/be).

They \_\_\_\_\_ (talk) with some girls.

B: \_\_\_\_\_ (you/say) hello to them?

A. Although I \_\_\_\_\_ (call) their names, they \_\_\_\_\_ (not/hear) me.

B: Maybe they \_\_\_\_\_ (not/notice) you \_\_\_\_\_ (be) there

**Put the verbs in brackets into the Past Continuous or the Past Simple.**

1) Frank \_\_\_\_\_ (finish) his lunch and \_\_\_\_\_ (ring) his friend Jason.

2) Jason \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV when Fran \_\_\_\_\_ (phone) him.

3) He \_\_\_\_\_ (turn off) the TV when he \_\_\_\_\_ (hear) the phone ringing.

4) They \_\_\_\_\_ (decide) what to do when Jason \_\_\_\_\_ (suggest) going to the club.

5) Frank \_\_\_\_\_ Jason \_\_\_\_\_ (pick up) and \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) to the club.

6) Two other people \_\_\_\_\_ (use) their tennis court when they \_\_\_\_\_ (arrive).

7) They \_\_\_\_\_ (drink) a soda and \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) a sandwich while they \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) to play.

8) While they \_\_\_\_\_ (play), it \_\_\_\_\_ (start) to rain so they \_\_\_\_\_ (have) to stop playing.



## Activity 6

**Put the verbs into the correct form (past progressive).**

1. When I phoned my friends, they (play) \_\_\_\_\_ Monopoly.
2. Yesterday at six I (prepare) \_\_\_\_\_ dinner.
3. The kids (play) \_\_\_\_\_ in the garden when it suddenly began to rain.
4. I (practice) \_\_\_\_\_ - the guitar when he came home.
5. We (not / cycle) \_\_\_\_\_ all day.
6. While Aaron (work) \_\_\_\_\_ in his room, his friends (swim) \_\_\_\_\_ in the pool.
7. I tried to tell them the truth but they (listen / not) \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What (you / do) \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday?
9. Most of the time we (sit) \_\_\_\_\_ in the park.