



Past Continuous Inglés

LEARNING PATHWAY

- With this worksheet, you will put into practice and consolidate your knowledge on **past continuous**.
- This topic is part of the unit related to tenses, as illustrated in the following figure.



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INTRODUCTION

As stated in previous worksheets, we could divide tenses in English into three main groups: past, present, and future. We are going to make use of the past tense, specifically the **past continuous**, to say what was (or was not) happening around (before, at, and perhaps after) a past time (Swan & Walter, 2001). In this worksheet, we will be reviewing its affirmative, negative, and interrogative form, as well as a comparative table with the main differences between the **past simple** and **past continuous** tenses.

CONTENTS

We will use the past continuous to talk about **actions** or **events** that **were going on** at some time in the **past** (Seaton & Mew, 2007). It also shows the action went on for some time, but is now **finished** (Hall & Barduhn, 2016). Additionally, also stated by Hall and Barduhn (2016), past continuous is often used in storytelling to **set a scene** or describe a **situation**.

How to form the affirmative

As you can see above, past continuous is formed with verb **'was'** and **'were'** followed by the **present participle** (Hall & Barduhn, 2016). Verbs in its present participle form end in **-ing** (reading, listening, singing, etc.)

subject + was/were + ...ing

I	-----	was	----->	reading
You	-----	were	----->	driving
He	-----	was	----->	running
She	-----			
It	-----			
We	-----	were	----->	playing
They	-----	were	----->	writing

Previously, when we learned about **present** continuous, we found that there are some exceptions when working with present participle forms. Let's look at these exceptions once again:

• For most verbs	+ -ing → sleeping (sleep)
• When verbs end in -e	-e disappears + -ing → hoping (hope)
• When verbs end in -ie	-ie changes to y + -ing → dying (die)

How to form the negative

For its negative form, we need to add 'not' after verb 'to be.' But remember, we are working with '**past** continuous,' therefore, verb 'to be' must be in its past form (**was** or **were**, depending on the subject.)

subject + was/were + not + ...ing

I	was not	reading
You	were not	driving
He	was not	running
She		
It		
We	were not	playing
They	were not	writing



Important

As with the present continuous tense, contractions are also possible in negative past continuous (**was not = wasn't**, **were not = weren't**, etc.). Always remember that you can use them in **informal contexts** and **conversations**.

How to form questions

According to Seaton and Mew (2007), we create the interrogative form of past continuous following the structure below:

was/were + subject + ...ing + ?

Was	-----	I	----->	reading?
Were	-----	you	----->	driving?
Was	-----	he	-----	running?
	-----	she	-----	
	-----	it	-----	
Were	-----	we	----->	playing?
Were	-----	they	----->	writing?

Past Simple vs Past Continuous

While in the previous worksheet you learned about past simple; this time you learned about past continuous. A comparative table between both tenses is presented below:

Past Simple	Past Continuous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to Swan & Walter (2001), the simple past is used to talk about a complete action (long or short.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the other hand, we use the past progressive for actions which were not complete at a past time (Swan & Walter, 2001)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When using the past simple and past continuous together, as stated by Hall & Barduhn (2016,) the past continuous describes a longer, background action, while the past simple describes a shorter action that interrupts the background action. You can use it, for example, with 'while' (Swan & Walter, 2001) <p style="text-align: center;">e.g., I was taking a nap when she arrived home They were playing videogames while their father was sleeping</p>	

Let's look at further examples comparing these two tenses:

B *past simple*

- A: What **did** you **do** yesterday morning?
- B: We **played** tennis. (from 10 to 11.30)

we played
(complete action)

- Jack **read** a book yesterday. (= from beginning to end)
- Did** you **watch** the film on television last night?
- It **didn't rain** while we were on holiday.

past continuous

- A: What **were** you **doing** at 10.30?
- B: We **were playing** tennis.

we were playing
(unfinished action)

- Jack **was reading** a book when the phone rang.
- Were** you **watching** television when I phoned you?
- It **wasn't raining** when I got up.

Figura 1

Figure 1. Examples and differences between past simple and past continuous. Murphy, Viney, & Craven (2004).

SOLVED ACTIVITIES

The following activities will help you to put into practice what you learned throughout this worksheet, giving you the opportunity to identify which area you need to reinforce.

- Read comprehensively.
- Go over and use this worksheet to support you.
- Do not look at the answer key until you finish the activities on your own. Challenge yourself!
- If you have any questions on this topic, write them down and share them with your tutor.

Good job!

1. Make the **affirmative** past continuous.

e.g. I _____ and John was drinking wine. (**dance**)
I **was dancing** and John was drinking wine.

- a. She _____ with the dog. (**play**)
- b. They _____ the laundry. (**do**)
- c. We _____ the dishes. (**wash**)
- d. He _____ home. (**drive**)

To complete this activity, please check the examples in the segment called '**How to form the affirmative.**' You will be able to correctly use the past continuous in its affirmative form after finishing them.

2. Make the **negative** past continuous.

e.g. They _____ (**not / drink**) alcohol. They were drinking juice.
They **were not drinking** alcohol. They were drinking juice.

- a. We _____ (**not / paint**) the fence. We were painting the rooms.
- b. The kids _____ (**not / sleep**). They were reading a book.
- c. The girl was swimming on the beach. She _____ (**not / swim**) across the river.
- d. I _____ (**not / iron**) the clothes. I was cleaning the bathroom.

To complete this activity, please check the examples in the segment called '**How to form the negative.**' You will be able to correctly use the past continuous in its negative form after finishing them.

3. Make the **interrogative** past continuous.

e.g. Joe was walking his dog this morning.
Was Joe walking his dog this morning?

- a. Diane and Anne were eating lunch at the Chinese restaurant.

- b. Mr. Smith was texting a friend when he had an accident last Saturday.

- c. You were riding a motorbike when I saw you last Monday.

- d. You were helping your friend to complete the assignment.

To complete this activity, please check the examples in the segment called '**How to form the interrogative.**' You will be able to correctly use the past continuous in its interrogative form after finishing them.

ANSWER KEY

1.
 - a. She **was playing** with the dog.
 - b. They **were doing** the laundry.
 - c. We **were washing** the dishes.
 - d. He **was driving** home.

2.
 - a. We **were not painting** the fence. We were painting the rooms.
 - b. The kids **were not sleeping**. They were reading a book.
 - c. The girl was swimming on the beach. She **was not swimming** across the river.
 - d. I **was not ironing** the clothes. I was cleaning the bathroom.

3.
 - a. **Were Diane and Anne eating** lunch at the Chinese restaurant?
 - b. **Was Mr. Smith texting** a friend when he had an accident last Saturday?
 - c. **Were you riding** a motorbike when I saw you last Monday?
 - d. **Were you helping** your friend to complete the assignment?

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Here, a series of **fill-in-the-blank activities** are presented. You will have to complete the blank spaces with the **required information**. These activities will help you to confirm how much you have learned so far. If you have any questions, read, and go over the text once again. If you still have doubts, please take notes, and share them with your tutor. Remember: the main objective of this worksheet is that **you** learn. Good job!

1. What were the people doing yesterday? Look at the pictures and complete the sentences with words from the box. Use the past progressive (Swan & Walter, 2001)

cook supper	dance	drive home
not watch TV	play cards	

e.g., At 9:15 Sarah **was playing cards**

- a. At 10:30 Fred and Alice
- b. At 8:20 Keith
- c. At 7:50 Mary
- d. At 11:00 Oliver



2. Write the past continuous in its **affirmative** form. **What were they doing?**



- a. Stella _____ her dog. (**hold**)
- b. Rose and Dakota _____ to Ellie. (**listen**)
- c. Ellie _____ a story. (**tell**)
- d. Ellie and Stella _____ their dogs. (**introduce**)
- e. The girls _____ a picnic. (**have**)
- f. They _____. (**laugh**)

3. Write the past continuous in its **interrogative** form (Swan & Walter, 2001)

e.g., 'At 10.00 I was reading.' (a newspaper) 'Were you reading a newspaper?'

'When I saw Peter, he was eating.' (what) 'What was he eating?'

- a. 'When I went into Pat's office, she was writing.' (what) _____
- b. 'At lunchtime Joe was shopping.' (where) _____
- c. 'At 8:30 Ann was cooking.' (what) _____
- d. 'When I arrived, all the children were crying.' (why) _____
- e. 'At midnight, Mary and Jack were driving.' (to Scotland)

ANSWER KEY

1. What were the people doing yesterday? Look at the pictures and complete the sentences with words from the box. Use the past progressive (Swan & Walter, 2001)
 - a. We At 10:30 Fred and Alice **were dancing.**
 - b. At 8:20 Keith **was cooking supper.**
 - c. At 7:50 Mary **was driving home.**
 - d. At 11:00 Oliver **was not watching TV.**

2. Write the past continuous in its **affirmative** form. **What were they doing?**
 - a. Stella **was holding** her dog. (hold)
 - b. Rose and Dakota **were listening** to Ellie. (listen)
 - c. Ellie **was telling** a story. (tell)
 - d. Ellie and Stella **were introducing** their dogs. (introduce)
 - e. The girls **were having** a picnic. (have)
 - f. They **were laughing.** (laugh)

3. Write the past continuous in its **interrogative** form (Swan & Walter, 2001)
 - a. 'When I went into Pat's office, she was writing.' **What was she writing?**
 - b. 'At lunchtime Joe was shopping.' **Where was Joe shopping?**
 - c. 'At 8:30 Ann was cooking.' **What was Ann cooking?**
 - d. 'When I arrived, all the children were crying.' **Why were all the children crying?**
 - e. 'At midnight, Mary and Jack were driving.' **Were Mary and Jack driving to Scotland?**

SUMMARY

Summarizing, we will be using the **past continuous** tense to talk about **actions or events** that were **in progress** at some time in the **past** (Hall and Barduhn, 2016). In its **affirmative form**, we need to combine the verb 'to be' **in the past** ('**was**' or '**were**') with -ing verbs (e.g., *she **was reading** a book.*) For the **negative form**, on the other hand, we will add '**not**' between the verb 'to be' and the main verb (the one with the -ing ending, for example: *they **were not working** here last night*). Lastly, for **questions**, we are going to swap the order of the 'be' verb (e.g., ***were they working** here last night?*)

Here, you will find a diagram summing up all the information previously presented.



Subject + was/were + Verb (-ing) + Complement
I **was listening** to music



Subject + was/were + not + Verb (-ing) + Complement
She **was not paying** attention



Was/were + Subject + Verb (-ing) + Complement + ?
Were they doing their homework?



Important

Grammar; Tenses; Past Tense; Past Continuous

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