

Past simple (I did)

Study this example:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an Austrian musician and composer. He lived from 1756 to 1791. He started composing at the age of five and wrote more than 600 pieces of music. He was only 35 years old when he died.

Lived/started/wrote/was/died are all *past simple*.



Very often the past simple ends in **-ed** (*regular verbs*):

- I work in a travel agency now. Before that I **worked** in a shop.
- We **invited** them to our party but they **decided** not to come.
- The police **stopped** me on my way home last night.
- She **passed** her examination because she **studied** very hard.

For spelling (stopped, studied etc.), see Appendix 6.

But many verbs are **irregular**. The past simple does *not* end in -ed. For example:

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|---------------|--|
| write → wrote | • Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music. |
| see → saw | • We saw Rose in town a few days ago. |
| go → went | • I went to the cinema three times last week. |
| shut → shut | • It was cold, so I shut the window. |

For a list of irregular verbs, see Appendix 1.

In questions and negatives we use **did/didn't + infinitive** (enjoy/see/go etc.):

I	enjoyed	did	you	enjoy?	I	didn't	enjoy
she	saw	she	she	see?	she	didn't	see
they	went	they	they	go?	they	didn't	go

- A: Did you go out last night?
- B: Yes, I went to the cinema but I didn't enjoy the film much.
- 'When did Mr Thomas die?' 'About ten years ago.'
- They didn't invite her to the party, so she didn't go.
- 'Did you have time to write the letter?' 'No, I didn't.'

Be careful when do is the main verb in the sentence:

- What did you do at the weekend? (*not* 'what did you at the weekend')
- I didn't do anything. (*not* 'I didn't anything')

The past of **be** (am/is/are) is was/were:

I/he/she/it	was/wasn't	was	I/he/she/it?
we/you/they	were/weren't	were	we/you/they?

Note that we do *not* use did in negatives and questions with was/were:

- I was angry because they were late.
- Was the weather good when you were on holiday?
- They weren't able to come because they were so busy.
- Did you go out last night or were you too tired?

EXERCISES

5.1 Read what Sharon says about a typical working day:



SHARON

I usually get up at 7 o'clock and have a big breakfast. I walk to work, which takes me about half an hour. I start work at 8.45. I never have lunch. I finish work at 5 o'clock. I'm always tired when I get home. I usually cook a meal in the evening. I don't usually go out. I go to bed at about 11 o'clock. I always sleep well.

Yesterday was a typical working day for Sharon. Write what she did or didn't do yesterday.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 ... <u>She got up at 7 o'clock.</u> .. | 7 |
| 2 She a big breakfast. | 8 tired when home. |
| 3 She | 9 a meal yesterday evening. |
| 4 It to get to work. | 10 out yesterday evening. |
| 5 at 8.45. | 11 at 11 o'clock. |
| 6 lunch. | 12 well last night. |

5.2 Put one of these verbs in each sentence:

buy catch cost drink fall hurt sell spend teach throw win ~~write~~

- Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music.
- 'How did you learn to drive?' 'My father me.'
- We couldn't afford to keep our car, so we it.
- I was very thirsty. I the water very quickly.
- Paul and I played tennis yesterday. He's much better than me, so he easily.
- Don down the stairs this morning and his leg.
- Jim the ball to Sue, who it.
- Ann a lot of money yesterday. She a dress which £100.

5.3 A friend has just come back from holiday. You ask him about it. Write your questions.

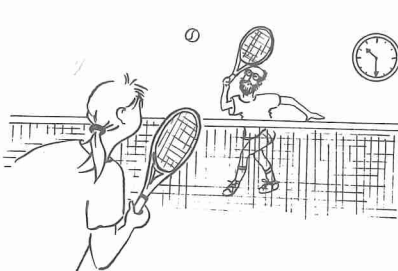
- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 (where/go?) <u>Where did you go?</u> .. | 6 (how/travel?) |
| 2 (go alone?) | 7 (the weather / fine?) |
| 3 (food/good?) | 8 (what / do in the evenings?) |
| 4 (how long / stay there?) | 9 (meet anybody interesting?) |
| 5 (stay / at a hotel?) | |

5.4 Complete the sentences. Put the verb into the correct form, positive or negative.

- It was warm, so I took off my coat. (take)
- The film wasn't very good. I didn't enjoy it very much. (enjoy)
- I knew Sarah was very busy, so I her. (disturb)
- I was very tired, so I to bed early. (go)
- The bed was very uncomfortable. I very well. (sleep)
- Sue wasn't hungry, so she anything. (eat)
- We went to Kate's house but she at home. (be)
- It was a funny situation but nobody (laugh)
- The window was open and a bird into the room. (fly)
- The hotel wasn't very expensive. It very much. (cost)
- I was in a hurry, so I time to phone you. (have)
- It was hard work carrying the bags. They very heavy. (be)

Past continuous (I was doing)

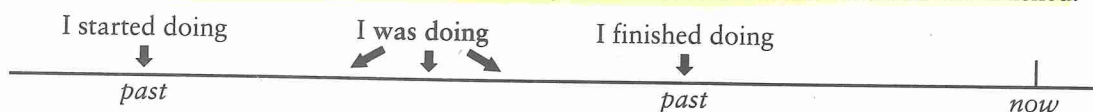
Study this example situation:



Yesterday Karen and Jim played tennis. They began at 10 o'clock and finished at 11.30. So, at 10.30 they **were playing** tennis. They were **playing** = 'they were in the middle of playing'. They had not finished playing. Was/were -ing is the *past continuous*:

I/he/she/it	was	playing
we/you/they	were	doing
		working etc.

We use the past continuous to say that somebody was in the middle of doing something at a certain time. The action or situation had already started before this time but had not finished:



- This time last year I **was living** in Brazil.
- What **were you doing** at 10 o'clock last night?
- I waved to her but she **wasn't looking**.

Compare the past continuous (I was doing) and past simple (I did):

<p><i>Past continuous</i> (in the middle of an action)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was walking home when I met Dave. (= in the middle of walking home) • Ann was watching television when the phone rang. 	<p><i>Past simple</i> (complete action)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I walked home after the party last night. (= all the way, completely) • Ann watched television a lot when she was ill last year.
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We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to say that something happened in the middle of something else:

- Tom **burnt** his hand when he **was cooking** the dinner.
- I **saw** you in the park yesterday. You **were sitting** on the grass and reading a book.
- While I **was working** in the garden, I **hurt** my back.

But we use the past *simple* to say that one thing happened *after* another:

- I **was walking** along the road when I **saw** Dave. So I **stopped** and we had a chat.

Compare:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Karen arrived, we were having dinner. (= We had already started dinner before Karen arrived.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Karen arrived, we had dinner. (= First Karen arrived and then we had dinner.)
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There are some verbs (for example, know/want/believe) that are not normally used in the continuous (see Unit 4A):

- We were good friends. We **knew** each other well. (*not* 'we were knowing')
- I was enjoying the party but Chris **wanted** to go home. (*not* 'was wanting')

EXERCISES

6.1 What were you doing at the following times? Write one sentence as in the examples.
The past continuous is not always necessary (see the second example).

- 1 (at 8 o'clock yesterday evening) ... I was having dinner with some friends.
- 2 (at 5 o'clock last Saturday) ... I was on a train on my way to London.
- 3 (at 10.15 yesterday morning)
- 4 (at 4.30 this morning)
- 5 (at 7.45 yesterday evening)
- 6 (half an hour ago)

6.2 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences. Use the past continuous.

- 1 Tom burnt his hand while he was cooking the dinner.
- 2 The doorbell rang while I
- 3 We saw an accident while we
- 4 Mary fell asleep while she
- 5 The television was on but nobody

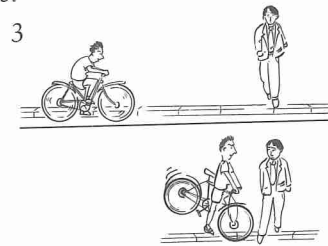
6.3 Put the verbs into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.



I saw (see) Sue in town yesterday but she (not/see) me.
She (look) the other way.



I (meet) Tom and Ann at the airport a few weeks ago. They (go) to Berlin and I (go) to Madrid.
We (have) a chat while we (wait) for our flights.



I (cycle) home yesterday when suddenly a man (step) out into the road in front of me. I (go) quite fast but luckily I (manage) to stop in time and (not/hit) him.

6.4 Put the verbs into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.

- 1 Jane was waiting (wait) for me when I arrived (arrive).
- 2 'What (you/do) this time yesterday?' 'I was asleep.'
- 3 '..... (you/go) out last night?' 'No, I was too tired.'
- 4 'Was Carol at the party last night?' 'Yes, she (wear) a really nice dress.'
- 5 How fast (you/drive) when the accident (happen)?
- 6 John (take) a photograph of me while I (not/look).
- 7 We were in a very difficult position. We (not/know) what to do.
- 8 I haven't seen Alan for ages. When I last (see) him, he (try) to find a job in London.
- 9 I (walk) along the street when suddenly I (hear) footsteps behind me. Somebody (follow) me. I was frightened and I (start) to run.
- 10 When I was young, I (want) to be a bus driver.