



## Beginner Past Continuous Tense

### Interrupted action in the past

Use the Past Continuous to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually an action in the Simple Past. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.

Examples:

*I **was watching** TV when she called.*

*When the phone rang, she **was writing** a letter.*

*While we **were having** a picnic, it started to rain.*

*Terada **was working** when Kojo had the car accident.*

*When Ikeda **was sleeping** last night, someone stole his car.*

### Specific time has an interruption.

Earlier, described above, the Past Continuous is interrupted by an action in the Simple Past. However, you can also use a specific time as an interruption.

Examples:

*Last night at 6:00 p.m., I **was eating** dinner.*

*At midnight, we **were still driving** through the desert.*

In the Simple Past a specific time is used to show when an action began or finished. In the Past Continuous a specific time only interrupts the action.

Examples:

*Last night at 6:00 p.m., I ate dinner. (I started eating at 6:00 p.m.)*

*Last night at 6:00 p.m., I **was eating** dinner. (I started earlier and at 6:00 p.m., I was in the process of eating dinner.)*

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### Parallel actions

When you use the Past Continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions were happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.

Examples:

*I **was studying** while he was making dinner.*

*When Mikimoto **was reading**, Miko **was watching** the television.*

*They **were eating** dinner, **discussing** their plans and **having** a good time.*

### Atmosphere

In English we often use a series of Parallel Actions to describe atmosphere in the past.

Examples:

*When I walked into the office, several people **were** busily **typing**, some **were talking** on the phones, the boss **was yelling** directions, and customers **were waiting** to be helped. One customer **was yelling** at a secretary and **waving** his hands. Others **were complaining** to each other about the bad service.*

### Repetition and Irritation with “always”

The Past Continuous with words such as *always* or *constantly* expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happened in the past. The concept is very similar to the expression *used to* but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words *always* or *constantly* between "be" and "verb+ing."

Examples:

1. She **was always coming** to class late.
2. He **was constantly talking**. He annoyed everyone.
3. I didn't like them because they **were always complaining**.