

1 The form of past continuous is:

was/were + '-ing'

2 You use the past continuous for an action which was interrupted by another action:

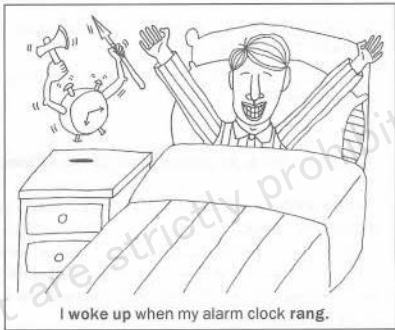
I was reading the newspaper when the doorbell rang.

They were flying from London to New York when the accident happened.

WARNING: If two things happen one after the other you use two verbs in the past simple tense:



As soon as he saw me he waved.



I woke up when my alarm clock rang.

3 You use the past continuous for an action which was still in progress at a particular time:

At 2.15 we were still waiting for the bus. It was just before midnight. We were talking quietly.

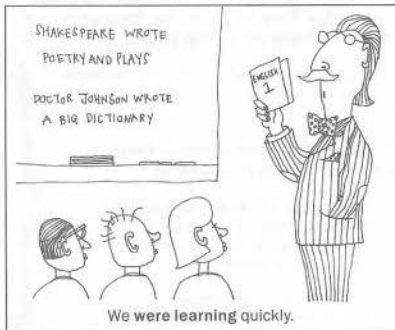
4 You often use the past continuous to set the scene for a story or for a series of events:

It was 1975. We were living in a small house in Liverpool.

On the day I had my accident. I was preparing for my examinations.

5 You use the past continuous to show that something is changing, developing or progressing:

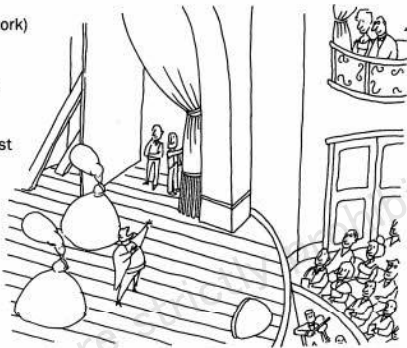
The children were growing up quickly.



We were learning quickly.

A Complete the following sentences. You should put one verb in the past simple and the other in the past continuous:

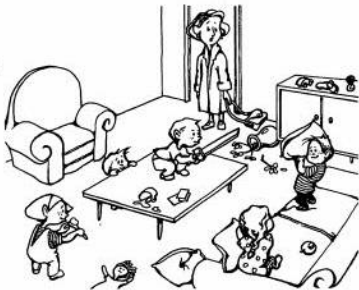
- I (meet) met Peter while I (shop) was shopping this morning.
- We (walk) _____ home this evening when it suddenly (begin) _____ to rain.
- I (hurt) _____ my back when I (work) _____ in the garden.
- I (stay) _____ in Oxford, so I (go) _____ to see Tim.
- Ken (do) _____ his homework last night and he (forget) _____ to telephone home.
- We (live) _____ in Greece when our first daughter (be) _____ born.
- She (work) _____ in the library when she (see) _____ Maria.



- We (go) _____ to the opera when we (stay) _____ in Milan.

B Complete the following sentences using the past simple or the past continuous:

- When he (hurt) _____ his back he (go) went to see the doctor.
- When she (hear) _____ the news she (begin) _____ to cry.
- We (listen) _____ to the radio when Fred (come) _____ home.
- I (hear) _____ a strange noise and the dog (begin) _____ to bark.
- Everyone (talk) _____ and suddenly the lights (go) _____ out.
- I (have) _____ a nice hot shower when the doorbell (ring) _____.
- I (have) _____ a nice hot shower when I (get) _____ home.



- The children (play) _____ happily when mother (arrive) _____ home.