

For, during, and while

A

For and during

We use **for** + a period of time to say how long something goes on.

For example:

- for two hours for a week for ages**
- We watched television **for two hours** last night.
 - Ann is going away **for a week** in September.
 - Where have you been? I've been waiting **for ages**.
 - Are you going away **for the weekend**?

We use **during** + *noun* to say when something happens (*not* how long).

For example:

- during the movie during our vacation during the night**
- I fell asleep **during the movie**.
 - We met a lot of nice people **during our vacation**.
 - The ground is wet. It must have rained **during the night**.

With a "time" word (for example, *the morning / the afternoon / the summer*), you can usually say **in** or **during**:

- It must have rained **in the night**. (*or . . . during the night.*)
- I'll call you sometime **during the afternoon**. (*or . . . in the afternoon.*)

You cannot use **during** to say how long something goes on:

- It rained **for three days** without stopping. (*not during three days*)

Compare **during** and **for**:

- I fell asleep **during the movie**. I was asleep **for half an hour**.

B

During and while

Compare:

We use **during** + *noun*:

- noun*
- I fell asleep **during the movie**.
 - We met a lot of interesting people **during our vacation**.
 - Robert suddenly began to feel sick **during the exam**.

We use **while** + *subject + verb*:

- subject + verb*
- I fell asleep **while I was watching** TV.
 - We met a lot of interesting people **while we were on vacation**.
 - Robert suddenly began to feel sick **while he was taking** the exam.

Some more examples of **while**:

- We saw Amanda **while we were waiting** for the bus.
- **While you were out**, there was a phone call for you.
- Tom read a book **while I watched** TV.

When you are talking about the future, use the *present* (*not will*) after **while**:

- I'll be in Toronto next week. I hope to see Tom **while I'm there**. (*not while I will be there*)
- What are you going to do **while you are waiting**? (*not while you will be waiting*)

See also Unit 24.

Exercises

115.1 Put in *for* or *during*.

1. It rained *for* _____ three days without stopping.
2. I fell asleep *during* _____ the movie.
3. I went to the theater last night. I met Sue _____ the intermission.
4. Matt hasn't lived in the United States all his life. He lived in Brazil _____ four years.
5. Production at the factory was seriously affected _____ the strike.
6. I felt really sick last week. I could hardly eat anything _____ three days.
7. I waited for you _____ half an hour and decided that you weren't coming.
8. Sue was very angry with me. She didn't speak to me _____ a week.
9. We usually go out on weekends, but we don't often go out _____ the week.
10. Jack started a new job a few weeks ago. Before that he was out of work _____ six months.
11. I need a change. I think I'll go away _____ a few days.
12. The president gave a long speech. She spoke _____ two hours.
13. We were hungry when we arrived. We hadn't had anything to eat _____ the trip.
14. We were hungry when we arrived. We hadn't had anything to eat _____ eight hours.

115.2 Put in *during* or *while*.

1. We met a lot of people *while* _____ we were on vacation.
2. We met a lot of people *during* _____ our vacation.
3. I met Mike _____ I was shopping.
4. _____ we were in Paris, we stayed at a very comfortable hotel.
5. _____ our stay in Paris, we visited a lot of museums and galleries.
6. The phone rang three times _____ we were having dinner.
7. The phone rang three times _____ the night.
8. I had been away for many years. _____ that time, many things had changed.
9. What did they say about me _____ I was out of the room?
10. Carlos read a lot of books and magazines _____ he was sick.
11. I went out for dinner last night. Unfortunately, I began to feel sick _____ the meal and had to go home.
12. Please don't interrupt me _____ I'm speaking.
13. There were many interruptions _____ the president's speech.
14. We were hungry when we arrived. We hadn't had anything to eat _____ we were traveling.

115.3 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

1. I fell asleep while *I was watching TV* _____.
2. I fell asleep during *the movie* _____.
3. I hurt my arm while _____.
4. Can you wait here while _____?
5. Most of the students looked bored during _____.
6. I was asked a lot of questions during _____.
7. Don't open the car door while _____.
8. The lights suddenly went out during _____.
9. It started to rain during _____.
10. It started to rain while _____.