Unit 6

Past Continuous (I was doing)

A

Study this example situation:



Yesterday Karen and Joe played tennis. They started at 10:00 and finished at 11:30.
So, at 10:30 they **were playing** tennis.

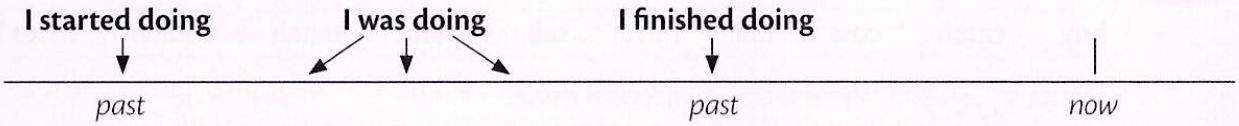
they **were playing** =
they were in the middle of playing, they had not finished

was/were + -ing is the *past continuous*:

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

B

I was doing something = I was in the middle of doing it at a certain time. The action or situation started before this time but had not finished:



- This time last year I **was living** in Hong Kong.
- What **were** you **doing** at 10:00 last night?
- I waved to Hannah, but she **wasn't looking**.

C

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

I **was doing** (= in the middle of an action)

- We were **walking** home when we met Dan. (in the middle of walking home)
- Kate **was watching** TV when we arrived.

I **did** (= complete action)

- We **walked** home after the party last night. (= all the way, completely)
- Kate **watched** TV a lot when she was sick last year.

D

You can say that something **happened** (*simple past*) in the middle of something else (*past continuous*):

- Matt **called** while we **were having** dinner.
- It **was raining** when I **got** up.
- I **saw** you in the park yesterday. You **were sitting** on the grass and **reading** a book.
- I **hurt** my back while I **was working** in the yard.

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

- I **was walking** along the road when I **saw** Dan. So I **stopped**, and we **talked** for a while.

Compare:

- When Karen arrived, we **were having** dinner. (= we had already started before she arrived)
- When Karen arrived, we **had** dinner. (= Karen arrived, and then we had dinner)

E

Some verbs (for example, **know** and **want**) are not normally used in *continuous* forms (**is** + **-ing**, **was** + **-ing**, etc.). See Unit 4A for a list of these verbs.

- 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)

Simple Past (**I did**) ➜ Unit 5

Exercises

6.1 Complete the sentences. Choose from:

was looking	~~**was wearing**~~	**wasn't listening**	**weren't looking**
was snowing	**was working**	**were sitting**	**were you going**

1 Today Hannah is wearing a skirt. Yesterday she *was wearing* pants.
2 "What did he say?" "I don't know. I ..... ."
3 We ..... in the back of the theater. We couldn't hear very well.
4 This time last year John ..... on a farm.
5 They didn't see me. They ..... in my direction.
6 The weather was bad. It was very cold, and it ..... .
7 I saw you in your car. Where ..... ?
8 I saw Kate a few minutes ago. She ..... for you.

6.2 Which goes with which?

1 When I got to the cafe,	a when she was living in Rome.	1	*f*
2 We fell asleep	b she was working in a clothing store.	2	
3 Amy learned Italian	c when I was driving home.	3	
4 Tom didn't come out with us	d but nobody was watching it.	4	
5 The car began to make a strange noise	e while we were watching a movie.	5	
6 The TV was on,	~~f my friends were waiting for me.~~	6	
7 When I first met Jessica,	g because he wasn't feeling well.	7	

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



I *saw* (see) Sue downtown yesterday, but she ..... (not/see) me. She ..... (look) the other way.

I ..... (ride) my bike home yesterday when a man ..... (step) out into the road in front of me. I ..... (go) pretty fast, but luckily I ..... (manage) to stop in time, and I ..... (not/hit) him.

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

1 Jen *was waiting* (wait) for me when I *arrived* (arrive).
2 "What ..... (you/do) at this time yesterday?" "I was asleep."
3 "..... (you/go) out last night?" "No, I was too tired."
4 How fast ..... (you/drive) when the accident ..... (happen)?
5 Sam ..... (take) a picture of me while I ..... (not/look).
6 We were in a very difficult position. We ..... (not/know) what to do, so we ..... (do) nothing.
7 I haven't seen Josh for ages. When I last ..... (see) him, he ..... (try) to find a job.
8 I ..... (walk) along the street when suddenly I ..... (hear) something behind me. Somebody ..... (follow) me. I was scared, and I ..... (start) to run.
9 When I was young, I ..... (want) to be a pilot. Later I ..... (change) my mind.
10 Last night I ..... (drop) a plate when I ..... (do) the dishes. Fortunately, it ..... (not/break).

→ **Additional Exercise 1** (page 296)