

The past simple is used:

for an action that started and ended in the past.

I saw a ghost last Friday.
Our cat climbed a tree five minutes ago.
In June 2005 I visited Rome and Florence.



2. for a repeated action in the past.

*When I was young, I watched lots of television every day after school.**
I always gave my mother flowers on her birthday.
**(We could also say, I used to watch lots of television.)*



3. for stative verbs, which are verbs that do not express an action, but a state of mind or being, e.g. **have (own), be, think (believe), know, dislike, need, owe, understand, wish.**

He had a small cottage in the woods.
He wasn't afraid of ghosts.
I knew all the other children at my school when I was a child.

Regular past simple tense verbs end in **-ed**.

I talked to my uncle yesterday.
I phoned my girlfriend this morning.

Irregular past simple tense verbs do not end in **-ed**.

You need to learn irregular past tense verbs.

I felt sick yesterday morning so I went to the doctor.



The past continuous tense is used:

1. when talking about TWO actions in the past; one continues for a period, and the other starts and ends (past simple).

While I was talking on the phone, someone stole my car.
I was making breakfast when the cat knocked over the milk carton, so I burnt the toast.

*These sentences usually use **while** or **when**.*

2. to talk about TWO actions in the past, both happening over a period.

I was working on my computer and my children were watching television.

3. to talk about a TEMPORARY activity taking place over a limited time.

I was living in Indoороpilly when it happened.
I was staying at my friend's house while my parents were touring Italy.



The past continuous tense is **was / were + the present participle**.

(The present participle is the base of a **verb + ing** i.e. **walk** ➔ **walking**).

Exercise 1- A DISASTROUS DINNER

Read the story. Mark the past tenses in **two colors** - one for **past simple** and one for **past continuous**.

Last Friday, Mrs. Anderson planned to have a delicious dinner. She bought a T-bone steak and some cream and apples for an apple pie. When she came home from the shops she put her shopping on the table.

While she was **setting the table**, her two pets sat **underneath** it and watched her. Then she went to the kitchen to make the pastry for the pie. She was a little forgetful so she didn't realize the steak, cream and apples were still on the table.

While she was making the pastry, the dog jumped on a chair and looked **longingly** at the steak. At last it took the steak in its mouth and jumped off the chair, just as Mrs. Anderson was coming back into the dining room.

Mrs. Anderson screamed, but the dog ran into the garden. She ran after the dog.

While she was chasing the dog, the cat jumped on the table and started drinking the cream.

Mrs. Anderson didn't manage to catch the dog, and she came back into the dining room. When she saw the cat, she **shrieked**, and the cat **got** such a **fright** that it jumped a meter into the air, and leapt out the window. Mrs. Anderson threw her broom at the cat, but she missed, and broke the window. At the same time she **overbalanced** and put her hand in the cream, spilling it all over the tablecloth.

Poor Mrs. Anderson - she had no dinner, only a dirty tablecloth and a broken window.



Glossary: **set the table** - put knives and forks, plates, salt etc. on the table., **underneath** - under it., **longingly** - e.g. the dog wanted it but knew it couldn't have it., **shriek** - louder than scream., **get a fright** - suddenly (not the same as be frightened)., **overbalance** - to lose your balance and fall.

Exercise 2

Answer these questions about the story. Answer in complete sentences.

1. What did Mrs. Anderson plan?
2. Why did she buy cream and apples?
3. When did her pets watch her?
4. Where did she leave the steak?
5. When did the dog jump on the chair?
6. How did the dog look at the steak?
7. When did the dog jump off the chair?
8. Where did the dog go?
9. What was she doing when the cat jumped on the table?
10. What did Mrs. Anderson do when she saw the cat?
11. How much of a fright did the cat get?
12. Where did the cat go?
13. What did Mrs. Anderson throw?
14. How did she spill the cream?

Exercise 3

Make questions and answers from the word prompts below.

Use **when** + the past simple in the question. Use **while**, **I + the past continuous tense** in the answers.

Example: *break your leg / skiing* **Answer:** *When did you break your leg? I broke it while I was skiing.*

1. get your clothes dirty / picking strawberries
2. sprain your ankle / running for the bus
3. cut your foot / walking on the beach
4. crash your car / driving to work
5. hurt your back / making the bed

Answer Key:

Exercise 2 Sample Answers

1. She planned to have a delicious dinner.
2. She bought them for an apple pie.
3. Her pets watched her while she was setting the table.
4. She left the steak on the table.
5. It jumped on the chair while she was making the pastry.
6. The dog looked at it longingly.
7. The dog jumped off the chair as she was coming into the dining room.
8. It ran into the garden.
9. She was chasing the dog.
10. She shrieked when she saw the cat.
11. It got such a fright that it jumped a meter into the air.
12. The cat went out the window.
13. She threw her broom at the cat.
14. She overbalanced and put her hand in the cream.

Exercise 3

1. When did you get your clothes dirty? - I got my clothes dirty while I was picking strawberries..
2. When did you sprain your ankle? - I sprained my ankle while I was running for the bus..
3. When did you cut your foot? - I cut my foot while I was walking on the beach..
4. When did you crash your car? - I crashed my car while I was driving to work.
5. When did you hurt your back? - I hurt my back while I was making the bed.