

Simple Past vs Past Continuous

Simple Past

- An activity or situation that began and ended at a particular time in the past.
eg I walked to school yesterday
- A past habit or routine
eg I lived in Sparta for seven years but now I live in Athens
- Activities that happen one after the other
eg I got dressed, had breakfast and went to school

Key words: last/ago/yesterday/when

Past Continuous

- An activity that was in progress at a certain time in the past
eg I was doing my homework at 5 yesterday afternoon.
- An activity which was in progress when something else happened
eg I was watching TV when my mum came home
- Two or more activities taking place at the same time
eg I was doing my homework while my friend was playing in the park
- To describe the background of a story
eg It was early in the morning. The sun was shining. People were walking in the streets. Then suddenly a bang was heard.

Key words: while, as

Exercise: Use the Simple Past or the Past Continuous

1. I (hear, not) _____ the thunder during the storm last night because I (sleep) _____.
2. It was beautiful yesterday when we went for a walk in the park. The sun (shine) _____. A cool breeze (blow) _____. The birds (sing) _____.
3. My brother and sister (argue) _____ about something when I (walk) _____ into the room.
4. While Mrs Emerson (read) _____ the little boy a story, he (fall) _____ asleep, so she (close) _____ the book and quietly (tiptoe) _____ out of the room.
5. It was my first day of class. I (find, finally) _____ the right room. The room (be, already) _____ full of students. On one side of the room, students (talk, busily) _____ to each other in Spanish. Other students (speak) _____ Japanese, and some (converse) _____ in Arabic. It sounded like the United Nations. Some of the students, however, (sit, just) _____ quietly by themselves. I (choose) _____ an empty seat in the last row and (sit) _____ down. In a few minutes, the teacher (walk) _____ into the room and all the multilingual conversation (stop) _____.
6. '(you, hear) _____ what she just said?'
'No, I (listen, not) _____. I (think) _____ about something else.'