

PAST TENSES

PAST SIMPLE

I went / I played

The main use of the past simple is for finished actions in the past. For example:

- I *was* born in San Francisco.
- I *cleaned* my room.
- I *forgot* my key.

PAST CONTINUOUS

I was going / I was playing

We use this tense when we are talking about actions in progress in the past. Another common use of the past continuous is to show that a longer action was interrupted (usually by a shorter action in the past simple). We often use the time expression *when*. For example:

- I *was swimming* in the sea when I saw a shark.
- Henry *was sitting* at home when the phone rang.
- She *was playing* golf when it began to rain.

SIMPLE PAST PERFECT

I had gone / I had played

We use it when one action happens before another past action. For example:

A. The film *had started* when *we arrived*. (the film started *before* we arrived)

B. The film *started* when *we arrived* (we arrived at the *same* time the film started)

We use time expressions such as *before*, *by the time* and *when*.

PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS

I had been going / I had been playing

We use it to show that an action which started in the past continued up to another point in the past. For example:

- She *had been living* in Italy for three years when she lost her job.
- I *had been waiting* for ten minutes before the bus came.
- By the time Steve arrived I *had been working* for nearly eight hours!