

It was winter. I was staying with my grandparents at the time. One day I needed to go to London. My grandparents offered to drive me to the station. It was snowing and the traffic was moving really slowly so I decided to get out and walk. As I arrived at the station the last passengers were getting on the train. I ran to the platform, but it was too late. The train was leaving the station.

Presentation

Use the past continuous to talk about actions and situations in progress at a particular moment in the past:
It was snowing and the traffic was moving really slowly.

Past continuous

Affirmative and negative

I / He / She / It	was wasn't (was not)	running.
We / You / They	were weren't (were not)	

Questions and short answers

Where	was	I / he / she / it	going?	
	were	we / you / they		
Yes,	I / he / she / it	was.	No, I / he / she / it	wasn't.
Yes,	you / we / they	were.	No, you / we / they	weren't.

You also often use the past continuous to describe the background to a story:

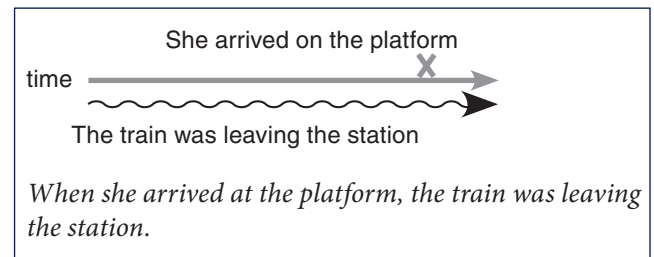
It was winter. I was staying with my grandparents at the time.

Do not use the past continuous with stative verbs:
I needed ... (not I was needing.)

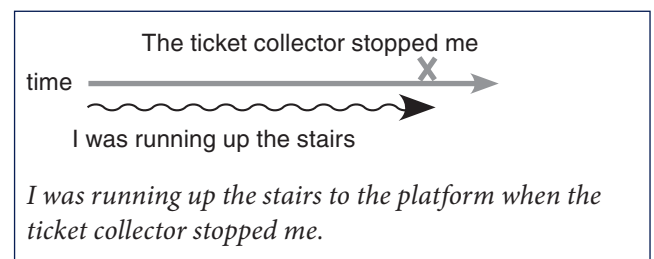
See Unit 9 for information about stative verbs.

Past continuous and past simple

You can use the past continuous with the past simple to talk about two actions that happened at the same time. Use the past continuous to talk about the action which was already in progress. Use the past simple to talk about a second, shorter action:



The second, shorter action sometimes interrupts the action already in progress:



1 Complete the sentences with *was*, *were*, *wasn't* or *weren't*.

- 1 What you doing at ten o'clock last night?
- 2 Why he running away so fast?
- 3 He doing his homework. He watching TV instead!
- 4 They disturbing the neighbours with their loud music.
- 5 I'm sorry. I working late at the office and I forgot to call.
- 6 Sorry, we listening. What did you say?
- 7 She living there for very long, only a few weeks, I think.
- 8 They having problems with their car, so they took a taxi.

2 Choose the correct form of the verb. Then listen and check.**Conversation 1**

- A: What ¹ *did you do* / *were you doing* at 2 a.m. this morning? ² *Did you have* / *Were you having* a party?
- B: No, not a party. We ³ *invited* / *were inviting* some friends round for dinner. Why?
- A: The music was really loud! I ⁴ *tried* / *was trying* to get to sleep.
- B: Sorry! I ⁵ *didn't know* / *wasn't knowing* it was so loud.

Conversation 2

- C: Oh! Hello! I didn't know you ⁶ *waited* / *were waiting* for me. I ⁷ *spoke* / *was speaking* to Mark on the phone.
- D: It's OK. I ⁸ *finished* / *was finishing* work about half an hour ago. Would you like to go for a quick coffee? Have you got time?
- C: Yes, I have. I ⁹ *just looked* / *was just looking* at a report, but I can finish it later.

3 Complete the text with the past continuous or past simple of the verbs in brackets.

A man ¹ (walk) down the street. It ² (be) a beautiful day – the sun ³ (shine) and the birds ⁴ (sing). The man ⁵ (walk) past a park bench when he ⁶ (see) a piece of paper on the floor. He ⁷ (pick) it up. It ⁸ (be) a lottery ticket. He ⁹ (cross) the street to a shop where a woman ¹⁰ (write) the winning lottery numbers on a board. He ¹¹ (read) the numbers on the board and ¹² (look) at the numbers on his ticket. He couldn't believe his eyes! As he ¹³ (walk) out of the shop, he ¹⁴ (dream) about how he would spend his three-million-pound prize!