

Past progressive and past simple

A Starting activities

1 What were you doing?

Past progressive

- 1 Work in pairs. Ask your partner questions about what he or she was doing every hour yesterday morning (from eight o'clock to twelve o'clock). Take turns to ask and answer. Use the past progressive, like this:

Use the past progressive, like this:

A: *What were you doing at eight o'clock yesterday morning?*

B: *I was getting dressed.*

- 2 Make a list of the things you were both doing at the same time.

At eight o'clock we were both getting dressed.

2 Cinderella, all wrong

Past simple

Work in pairs or small groups. One person in each pair or group reads the story of Cinderella aloud. Every time you hear something wrong, stop the story and correct the mistake, using a past simple negative, like this: *No, Cinderella wasn't a man, she was a woman.* (If you don't know the story of Cinderella, read Activity note 7 on page 138 before you start.)

Cinderella

Cinderella was a young man who lived with her stepmother and her two beautiful sisters. Cinderella made the two sisters do all the work around the house and she wore beautiful clothes while her two sisters went around in rags. One day there was a ball at the palace and an ugly fairy godmother appeared and told Cinderella that she could go to the ball – but she had to be back by half-past seven. So Cinderella went to the ball and danced with

the short fat prince. As she left she dropped her football boot on the stairs. The next day the prince searched everywhere for Cinderella and when he found her he gave her a job in the palace kitchen.



3 Some questions

Use of the past progressive and past simple

Work as a class.

- 1 Sentence 1: *I was having lunch at the café when I saw John in the street.*
Sentence 2: *I had lunch at the café and then I saw John in the street.*
- a Had I finished lunch when I saw John in sentence 1?
b Had I finished lunch when I saw John in sentence 2?
- 2 *I was walking along the street when I (verb) . . .*
- a *I was walking* is past progressive. Which tense do you think the missing verb will be?
b Can you start the sentence *When I (verb) . . .*? In other words can you turn the sentence round?
- 3 *I was driving to London when the accident happened.*

There are two actions in this sentence, driving to London and the accident happening. Which of the two actions do you think the speaker sees as the most important one and which one is the 'background' action (the less important one)?

When you have finished look at Activity note 3 on page 136.

B Grammar guide

1 Past progressive

We use the past PROGRESSIVE when we refer to something that was happening (that is, it was in PROGRESS) at a definite time in the past.

At one o'clock yesterday I was having lunch.

- We can use *while* and *when* to join two actions which were happening at the same time in the past. Both actions have a past progressive verb.

He was doing the shopping while I was parking the car.

- We can use *still* to emphasize that something was continuing, especially after the time it was expected to finish.

At a quarter-past ten I was still waiting for the train.

2 Past simple

We use the past simple when we refer to a finished action or situation in the past.

We use the past simple to talk about:

- finished single actions or situations:

I went to London yesterday.

I lived in London when I was a child.

- finished repeated actions or situations:

Every year when I was a child we went to Italy on holiday.

When she was young she lived in a different country every year.

NOTE State verbs are usually used in the past simple and not in the past progressive.

I was running home. I knew I was late. NOT ~~was knowing~~

NOTE *Ago* means 'at some time before now'. It is usually used with the past simple.

I lived there ten years ago.

3 Past progressive and past simple in context

When we use the past progressive and the past simple together, we can use the past progressive to 'paint a picture' of a longer 'background' action. We use the past simple for what the speaker sees as the main action in the past.

We were living in London when Susan made her first film.

We went indoors because it was raining.

- If there is more than one 'background' action, do not repeat *was/were* for the second or third action.

The teachers were sitting in the staff room, marking books and drinking coffee when I came in. (NOT ~~were marking books and were drinking coffee~~)

- You can use *while*, *as*, *when* and *whenever* to introduce the longer 'background' action. *While* and *as* mean 'at the same time as'. *When* tells you which time and *whenever* means 'every time'.

As/While I was driving to Oxford I saw a tiny little house with no roof.

When I was sitting on the beach I saw a ship in the distance.

He went to see Jennifer whenever he was visiting Oxford.

- You can use *just* to emphasize that the longer action had only recently started when the action in the past simple interrupted it.

I was just leaving when she asked me to stay.

C Activities

1 Some funny things happened

Past progressive and past simple

- 1 Work in pairs, A and B. Yesterday you and your partner were in a shop. (Decide together what kind of shop you were in.) Some unusual things happened.
Person A: Read Activity note 6 on page 137.
Person B: Read Activity note 44 on page 149.
- 2 Work in the same pairs or join with another pair to make a group of four. Choose one of your sentences from 1 and use it at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of an anecdote (a short funny story) about what happened in the shop. Use as many past simple and past progressive sentences in the anecdote as you naturally can.
- 3 Tell your anecdote to the class. List any interesting sentences with the past simple or past progressive from other people's stories.

2 An interview

Past progressive and past simple

- 1 Work in pairs. Choose a famous person you both know about, or choose someone from the 'Notes about famous people' in Activity note 45 on page 149. Working together, write sentences about the famous person using the structures below. Example: *While she was working as a model she met Roger Vadim, the film director.*

Structures

while + past progressive

(*While she/he was . . . ing . . .*)

when + past progressive

(*When she/he was . . . ing . . .*)

past simple + *years ago* (*She/he . . . years ago.*)

in (year) + past simple (*In . . . she/he . . .*)

from (year) *to* (year) (*She/he . . . from . . . to . . .*)

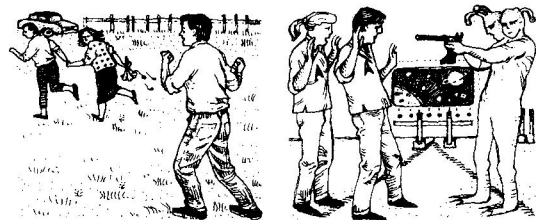
- 2 Work in the same pairs. One of you is an interviewer and the other is the famous person you wrote the sentences about in 1. The interviewer asks the famous person about his or

her life and work. Use the structures from 1 in the questions and the answers, like this: *What did your husband do while you were making films?* Use as many past simple and past progressive sentences as you naturally can.

3 Every picture tells a story

Past progressive and past simple

- 1 Work in pairs or groups. Look at the drawings below. For each of the four pictures write two 'background' sentences on a piece of paper using the past progressive. Leave plenty of space underneath the sentences for each picture. Examples: *The sun was shining. Geraldine and Mike were coming home from work.*
- 2 Under the two background sentences, write the beginning of each of the four stories (two or three sentences each) using the past simple. Example: *Geraldine heard a loud noise.*
- 3 Number the stories 1 to 4, then pass your work to another pair or group to continue the stories. Pass the paper on after you have written two or three sentences each time.
- 4 When all the stories are complete, read them to the whole class. Correct any mistakes.



1

3



2

4

D Accuracy practice

1 Write sentences. Use the past progressive in a positive, negative or question form.

- 1 /you/use/the hairdrier/when the lights went out?
- 2 /John/not talk/to Barbara. Barbara was not even in the room.
- 3 The last time I saw him,/Dick/drink/orange juice in the kitchen.
- 4 /you/drive/slowly/when you saw the man in the road?
- 5 /It/snow/as I left home for the last time.

2 Rewrite the sentences. Use the past progressive and past simple with *when* or *while*.

- 1 Before the bus had completely stopped, the child jumped off.
The bus _____
- 2 As Jane wrote the last sentence of her homework, her friend asked her to do his as well.
Jane was _____
- 3 During dinner at Harry's Anna lost her necklace.
While Anna _____
- 4 John brought the sweet in but I still had some chips on my plate to eat.
I was still _____
- 5 Did Emily wear that dress when she got married?
Was Emily _____ ?

3 Join the sentences using *as*, *just*, *while*, *when* and *ago*. Put the verbs into the past progressive or the past simple.

- 1 I (eat) my dinner. There (be) a knock at the door. (AS)
- 2 Camilla (get) into the car. Henry (shout) a warning. (JUST, WHEN)
- 3 You (dance) at the disco. I (paint) the kitchen at home. (WHILE)
- 4 I (know) her ten years. She (work) for Star Electronics at the same time as I was. (AGO, WHEN)
- 5 James (hear) a noise. He (listen to) the music. (WHILE)

4 Past progressive or past simple in context. Put in the right form of the verb in brackets. Sometimes either form is possible.

I ¹_____ (walk) along the street one day when I ²_____ (see) something very strange. I ³_____ (notice) a man the same height as me who ⁴_____ (have) a beard like mine. He ⁵_____ (wear) a blue shirt and an old pair of jeans and he ⁶_____ (carry) a bag with some books in it. He ⁷_____ (just/cross) the road ahead of me but he ⁸_____ (not/avoid) me deliberately, I ⁹_____ (be) sure of that. As he ¹⁰_____ (go across) the road I ¹¹_____ (follow) him. I ¹²_____ (wonder) whether or not to stop him and ask him whether he had noticed something strange too. I ¹³_____ (still/think) about it when he ¹⁴_____ (turn round) suddenly and we ¹⁵_____ (look at) each other. He ¹⁶_____ (look) amazed. 'It's unbelievable, isn't it?' I ¹⁷_____ (say) as I ¹⁸_____ (stare at) his face, which ¹⁹_____ (be) just like mine, and at his hair, which ²⁰_____ (also/be) just like mine. 'You are my double. You look exactly the same as me.'