

### Past Progressive - Use

1) actions were in progress at special time in the past

Peter **was reading** a book yesterday evening.

4) repeated actions irritating the speaker (with always, constantly, forever)

Andrew **was** always **coming** late.

2) two actions were happening at the same time (the actions do not influence each other)

Anne **was writing** a letter while Steve **was reading** the New York Times.

### Past Progressive - Signal words

**while**

3) together with the Simple Past

While we **were sitting** at the breakfast table, the telephone **rang**.

### Past Progressive - Form

**to be** (was, were) + **infinitive** + **-ing**

### Past Progressive - Examples

#### Affirmative sentences:

I **was playing** football.

You **were playing** football.

#### Negative sentences:

I **was not playing** football.  
I **wasn't playing** football.

You **were not playing** football.  
You **weren't playing** football.

#### Questions:

**Was** I **playing** football?

**Were** you **playing** football?

*“One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.”*

### **Past Progressive/Continuous - Signal words**

Signal words tell you what tense you have to use. In the Past Progressive we often use a period of time. A typical signal word is **while**. The Past Progressive is frequently used in sentences together with the Simple Past.

**while** (In this part of the sentence we usually use Past Progressive.)

While we **were watching** TV, Andy **was surfing** the internet.

**when** (In this part of the sentence we usually use **Simple Past**. The Past Progressive is used in the other part of the sentence.)

The ladies **were talking** when the accident **happened**

### **Form of the Past Progressive/Continuous**

We use a form of to be (was or were), the infinitive of the verb and the ending -ing.

**to be (was, were) + infinitive + -ing**

#### **Affirmative sentences:**

I/he/she/it **was playing** football.  
 We/you/they **were playing** football.

**NOTE:** Use **was** with **I, he, she, it** -  
 and **were** with **all other pronouns**.

In affirmative sentences we do not use short forms in the Past Progressive.

#### **Negative sentences:**

I/he/she/it **was not playing** football.  
 We/you/they **were not playing** football.

We use short forms in the Past Progressive in negative sentences:

I/he/she/it **wasn't playing** football.  
 We/you/they **weren't playing** football.

#### **Questions:**

In the Past Progressive we put the auxiliary (was or were) before the subject (Auxiliary - Subject - Verb - Rest).  
 see: [Questions in Past Progressive](#)

**Was** I/he/she/it **playing** football?  
**Were** we/you/they **playing** football?

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### Past Progressive - Spelling

Be careful with some words when adding -ing to the infinitive.

#### 1) consonant after a short, stressed vowel at the end of the word

**Double the consonant.**

sit - he **was sitting**  
 put - he **was putting**

If the consonant is not stressed, we do not double it:  
 benefit - benefit**ing** (Here we stress the first 'e', not the 'i'.)

In British English we double one -l at the end of the word:  
 travel - travel**ling**

#### 2) one -e at the end of the word

**Leave out the -e.**

write - he **was writing**  
 take - he **was taking**

**BUT:**

double -e: add -ing  
 see - he **was seeing**

#### 3) verbs ending in -ie

**Change 'ie' to 'y'.**

lie - he **was lying**

#### 4) verbs ending in -c

**Change 'c' to 'ck'.**

picnic - he **was picnicking**

### Special verbs in the Past Progressive

1) have as a full verb		
<i>affirmative sentence</i>	<i>negative sentence</i>	<i>question</i>
I <b>was having</b> a bath.	I <b>was not having</b> a bath.	<b>Was</b> I <b>having</b> a bath?
he, she, it:		
He <b>was having</b> a bath.	He <b>was not having</b> a bath.	<b>Was</b> he <b>having</b> a bath?
we, you, they:		
You <b>were having</b> a bath.	We <b>were not having</b> a bath.	<b>Were</b> we <b>having</b> a bath?

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–Frank Smith–

2) do as a full verb		
<i>affirmative sentence</i>	<i>negative sentence</i>	<i>question</i>
I <b>was doing</b> an exercise.	I <b>was not doing</b> an exercise.	<b>Was</b> I <b>doing</b> an exercise?
he, she, it:		
He <b>was doing</b> an exercise.	He <b>was not doing</b> an exercise.	<b>Was</b> he <b>doing</b> an exercise?
we, you, they:		
We <b>were doing</b> an exercise.	We <b>were not doing</b> an exercise.	<b>Were</b> we <b>doing</b> an exercise?

We often use the [short forms](#) with these verbs.

### **Long forms and short forms in the Past Progressive**

We use short forms of the auxiliaries. The Past Progressive is formed with the auxiliary to be (was, were), so short forms are only possible in negative sentences.

affirmative	
long form	short form
I <b>was reading</b>	can't be formed
he, she, it:	
he <b>was reading</b>	
we, you, they:	
we <b>were reading</b>	

negative (not after to be)	
long form	short form
I <b>was not reading</b>	I <b>wasn't reading</b>
he, she, it:	he, she, it:
he <b>was not reading</b>	he <b>wasn't reading</b>
we, you, they:	we, you, they:
we <b>were not reading</b>	we <b>weren't reading</b>

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## Past Progressive Tense Example Sentences

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### **Actions that were in progress at a certain point or at a certain time period in the past:**

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Yesterday evening we *were watching* the game so we couldn't come.

He *was sleeping* all night long.

*Were you sleeping* all night long?

*I wasn't resting, I was working!*

Last night at nine o'clock John *was washing* the dishes.

Why *was* John *washing* the dishes?

Last week we *were painting* the house.

This morning at five o'clock Shannon *was taking care* of her baby.

Where *was* Shannon *taking care* of her baby?

*I was studying* when the phone rang.

They *were eating* when their friends *showed up*.

While the cat *was sleeping* the mice were *eating* its food.

We *were having* a very nice picnic when it started to rain.

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### **Annoying repeating actions in the past:**

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My brother *was always snoring*.

They *were always making fun* of him.

You *were always complaining*.

This girl *was constantly losing* stuff.

He *was always bragging*.

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