

# The Past Progressive Tenses

Has someone ever interrupted you in the middle of something? Maybe you were reading, and a family member came in and begged for your attention? Maybe you were playing a video game, and your mom called for you to come down to dinner? When you are completing an action but get interrupted, you use the past progressive tense.

In this lesson, we'll look at the past progressive tense and some examples of how you use them.

You form the past progressive tense like this:

was + present participle (the form of verbs ending with “ing”)

were + present participle (the form of verbs ending with “ing”)

Use the past progressive (or continuous) tense to talk about actions that were going on at a certain moment in the past. Examples are given below.

1. It **was raining** outside when she woke up.

"Was raining" helps to set the stage for what happens next. It helps to describe the scene. It uses the helping verb ("was") with the present participle ("raining").

2. Miss Maison **was cleaning** the chalkboard.

3. Sally **was packing** her books into her schoolbag.

4. Jenny and I **were tidying** the classroom.

5. The twins **were fighting** in the corner.

6. Michael and John **were washing** the paint brushes.

In the examples above, was and were are called helping verbs, or auxiliary verbs. They help to form the past progressive tense when you join them to the present participle (the form of verbs ending in -ing).

Use the past progressive tense to describe an action that started in the past and was interrupted by another action. Examples are given below.

1. He **was writing** a letter when the phone rang.

2. Jenny **was wrapping** the gift when I walked in the room.

**Other examples:**

1. We **went swimming** all day yesterday.

"Went swimming" is in the past progressive tense. It describes an event that happened across an entire day, not just one moment. It uses the past tense verb of "to be" ("went") and adds "ing" to the verb (swim).

2. It **was raining** outside when she woke up.

"Was raining" helps to set the stage for what happens next. It helps to describe the scene. It uses the helping verb ("was") with the present participle ("raining").