

Past Simple or Past Continuous?

Activity Type

Grammar Exercises:
categorising, gap-
fill, matching, writing
sentences from prompts

Focus

Past simple vs. past
continuous

Aim

To learn and practice
how and when to use
the past simple and past
continuous.

Preparation

Make one copy of the
two-page worksheet for
each student.

Level

Intermediate (B1)

Time

35 minutes

Introduction

This past simple vs. past continuous worksheet helps students learn and practice how and when to use the past continuous, in contrast with the past simple.

Procedure

Give each student a copy of the two-page worksheet.

Students begin by reading situations and categorizing them based on whether the past simple or past continuous is used.

Exercise A - Answer key

Past simple: b, e, g, i Past continuous: a, c, d, f, h, j

Next, students complete sentences using verbs in brackets in the past simple or past continuous, as appropriate for the situation.

Exercise B - Answer key

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. was aching | 5. called | 8. needed |
| 2. was taking | 6. were / doing | 9. was / talking |
| 3. did / got | 7. stopped / got | 10. were planning |
| 4. was getting | | |

Students then match past simple and past continuous sentences with the situations in Exercise A.

Exercise C - Answer key

1. a 2. h 3. e 4. d 5. i 6. f 7. g 8. b 9. c 10. j

After that, students match timelines with the situations in Exercise A. The students then write past simple or past continuous sentences corresponding to the timelines using prompts, adding time adverbs, and other information where appropriate.

Exercise D - Possible answers

1. e Grace went to a football match yesterday.
2. h, i Milo was still cooking dinner when the guests arrived.
3. a Noah was texting his friends for hours last night.
4. g Jacob took three guitar lessons then quit.
5. f Hazel was giving a presentation at 11:00.
6. b Lucy wanted a pony when she was a child.
7. c John was always forgetting his keys.
8. d My daughter, Claire, was growing up so fast!
9. j Kate was planning to go to the library, but her plan changed.

When the students have finished, review their sentences together as a class and give feedback.