Past Continuous Worksheet: Was and Were + -ing

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NAME

DATE

Remember

Form	Example
I / he / she / it was + -ing	I was sleeping.
you / we / they were + -ing	They were having dinner.
Background (past continuous) + interruption (past simple)	I was cooking when the phone rang.
while + longer action; when + short action	While I was walking home, it started to rain.

Typical mistakes

× Learners often say	✓ Say instead
I was watch TV.	I was watching TV.
They was playing football.	They were playing football.
When I was arriving, the film started.	When I arrived, the film started.

1. Complete

Complete with the past continuous of the verb in brackets.

1. At eight o'clock I _____ (have) breakfast.
2. They _____ (not / listen) to the teacher.
3. What _____ you _____ (do) at midnight?
4. It _____ (rain) when we left.
5. She _____ (wait) for the bus when I saw her.
6. We _____ (talk) about you yesterday!
7. He _____ (not / drive) fast.
8. _____ they _____ (work) last night?
9. The sun _____ (shine) all morning.
10. I _____ (watch) a film when the lights went out.

2. Choose

Past simple or past continuous? Circle the correct option.

1. I (walked / was walking) home when I met Sam.
2. When the phone rang, I (answered / was answering) it.
3. While she (cooked / was cooking), she burned her hand.
4. We (were / was) playing cards.
5. He (fell / was falling) while he was skiing.
6. What were you (do / doing)?
7. They (arrived / were arriving) at ten.
8. It (snowed / was snowing) when we woke up.

3. Correct the mistakes

Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1. I was watch TV when you called.
2. They was sleeping.
3. While I walked home, I was seeing an accident.
4. She were reading a book.
5. What you were doing?
6. When I was arriving, the film started.

Writing

Write the beginning of a story (6–7 sentences). Describe the scene with the past continuous, then something unexpected happens in the past simple.

Speaking

- What were you doing at nine o'clock last night?
- Tell me about a time something surprising happened while you were travelling.
- Where were you living five years ago, and what were you doing?
- Describe a moment when the power went out or your internet stopped. What were you doing?

Answer key

1. Complete: 1 was having · 2 weren't listening · 3 were … doing · 4 was raining · 5 was waiting · 6 were talking · 7 wasn't driving · 8 Were … working · 9 was shining · 10 was watching

2. Choose: 1 was walking · 2 answered · 3 was cooking · 4 were · 5 fell · 6 doing · 7 arrived · 8 was snowing

3. Correct the mistakes: 1 I was watching TV when you called. · 2 They were sleeping. · 3 While I was walking home, I saw an accident. · 4 She was reading a book. · 5 What were you doing? · 6 When I arrived, the film started.

Writing, model answer: It was a cold Friday evening. I was walking home from work and it was raining. People were hurrying to the station and cars were waiting at the lights. I was thinking about dinner when my phone rang. It was a number I didn't know. I answered it, and a voice said my name very quietly.