

Past Simple vs Past Continuous

Use the **Past Continuous** for the longer action that was in progress, and the **Past Simple** for complete actions, including the short one that interrupted it: *I was cooking when she called.*

PAST SIMPLE · COMPLETE ACTION

She **called** at 8.



PAST CONTINUOUS · IN PROGRESS, BACKGROUND

I **was cooking** when she called.



1. Choose the right answer Circle a or b.

- I _____ TV when the lights went out.
a) watched b) was watching
- She _____ the door, picked up her keys and left.
a) opened b) was opening
- At midnight we _____
a) were still working b) still worked
- While he was jogging, he _____ an old friend.
a) was meeting b) met
- I _____ my phone while I was running.
a) dropped b) was dropping

2. Correct the mistake

Each sentence has one mistake. Write the correct sentence.

1. While I was driving, the phone was ringing.

2. I was seeing him at the station yesterday.

3. They was watching TV.

3. Your turn

Write two sentences about your own life: one with **Past Simple** and one with **Past Continuous**. Then explain the difference to a partner.

See the rule move

The full lesson, with more pictures, examples and a quiz that checks your answers, is free at clarigram.app/compare/past-simple-vs-past-continuous

Past Simple vs Past Continuous

1. Choose the right answer

1. **b) was watching** The TV watching was in progress when the lights went out.
2. **a) opened** A sequence of complete actions takes the Past Simple.
3. **a) were still working** At midnight the work was in progress.
4. **b) met** Meeting the friend is the short, complete action.
5. **a) dropped** Dropping is a single moment during the run.

2. Correct the mistake

1. **While I was driving, the phone rang.** The ringing is the short action that happened during the drive, so it takes the Past Simple.
2. **I saw him at the station yesterday.** Seeing someone is a single, complete moment here.
3. **They were watching TV.** Use were with you, we and they.

3. Your turn

Answers will vary. Check that each sentence follows the rule on page 1, or paste them into Clarigram to have them checked.