

# Past Progressive

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# Quick and Handy Grammar Review

## THE PAST PROGRESSIVE

### A. Function 1

The main function of the past progressive (also called *the past continuous*) is to show a continuing (long) action getting interrupted by a short past action.

Tense	Past Progressive (Main Use)
Diagram	<p>The diagram shows a horizontal timeline. At 6:30 pm, an 'X' marks the start of a long action: 'I was eating dinner.' A dotted line extends from this 'X' to 7:15 pm. At 7:15 pm, another 'X' marks the start of a short action: 'He called me.' A vertical line goes down from this 'X' to the text. A vertical line is also present to the right of the 7:15 pm mark.</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I <b>was eating</b> dinner when he <b>called</b> me last night.</li> <li>• When he <b>called</b> me last night, I <b>was eating</b> dinner.</li> </ul>
Form	was / were + -ing verb
Function	Two actions occurred in the past. The first (long) action is interrupted by the second (short) action.
Time Markers	when, while

## NOTES

- When forming the past progressive in English, the independent clause uses **was / were + -ing verb** and the dependent clause takes **the simple past**. Remember that the dependent clause can come before or after the independent clause. When a sentence begins with a dependent clause, use a comma.
  - **We were playing soccer** when the storm hit.
  - When the storm hit, **we were playing soccer**.
- Some verbs are common as short actions, and knowing them will help you identify if a sentence needs the past progressive. These verbs include *called, rang, arrived, came, landed, hit, and went out*.
  - They were studying when the bell **rang**.
  - She was driving when she **hit** a tree.

## Quick and Handy Grammar Review cont.

### B. Function 2

A secondary function of the past progressive is to emphasize that two long, continuing actions happened at the same time.

<b>Tense</b>	<b>Past Progressive (Secondary Use)</b>
<b>Diagram</b>	
<b>Examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I <b>was daydreaming</b> while you <b>were talking</b>.</li> <li>• You <b>were talking</b> while I <b>was daydreaming</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Form</b>	was / were + -ing verb
<b>Function</b>	Two long actions occurred at the same time in the past.
<b>Time Markers</b>	when, while

### NOTE

It is also possible to use the past progressive to emphasize only one long past action.

- We **were studying** all night.
- The children **were crying** loudly.
- I **was sitting** on the edge of my seat during the movie.
- He **was still playing** the guitar at 11:00 pm.
- At 8:00 pm my brothers **were doing** their homework.

## Quick and Handy Grammar Review cont.

### C. The Simple Past Vs. The Past Progressive

The simple past is used to show a finished past action.  
Compare the two tenses using the diagram below.

Tense	Simple Past	Past Progressive	
Diagram			
Form	<b>REGULAR VERBS:</b> verb + -ed <b>IRREGULAR VERBS:</b> various changes	was / were + -ing verb	
Function	A defined past action (you know when the action occurred)	A long past action interrupted by a short past action	Two long past actions occurring at the same time
Time Markers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yesterday</li> <li>• the day before yesterday</li> <li>• last</li> <li>• ago</li> <li>• when</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when</li> <li>• while</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when</li> <li>• while</li> </ul>
Example	I <b>studied</b> for the test last night.	She <b>was brushing</b> her teeth when the power <b>went out</b> .	They <b>were listening</b> to music when they <b>were driving</b> .

## Exercise 1

### THE ANDERSONS' VERY FULL DAY

The Andersons had a very busy day yesterday. Look at the schedule below and then complete the sentences in Part B.

#### A. Schedule

Time	Mr. Anderson	Mrs. Anderson
7:00 – 7:15	showered	got ready for work
7:15 – 7:20	made breakfast for kids	
8:00 – 8:30	ate breakfast	ate breakfast at work
9:00 – 12:00	wrote emails	taught history class
12:00 – 1:00	ate lunch in a restaurant	ate lunch at work
1:00 – 2:00	met with boss	taught math class
2:00 – 3:00	met with sales manager	met with principal
3:00 – 4:00	wrote reports	exercised at gym
4:00 – 5:00	picked up kids	bought groceries
5:30 – 6:00	took kids to tennis	made dinner
6:30 – 7:00	ate dinner	ate dinner
7:00 – 9:00	cleaned apartment	cleaned apartment
9:00 – 11:00	watched a movie	watched a movie
11:00	fell asleep	fell asleep

## Exercise 1 cont.

### B. Sentences

1. At 7:10 Mr. Anderson *was taking a shower* \_\_\_\_\_.
2. At 7:15 Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
3. At 8:15 Mr. and Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
4. At 10:00 Mr. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
5. At 11:00 Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
6. At 12:30 Mr. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_  
and Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
7. At 1:30 Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
8. At 3:30 Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
9. At 4:30 Mr. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_  
and Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
10. At 8:00 Mr. and Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.
11. At 12:30 am Mr. and Mrs. Anderson \_\_\_\_\_.

## Exercise 2

### CLASS SURVEY

Interview the classmates in your group. Find out what they were doing at the specific times mentioned and complete the chart below.

Time	Classmate #1	Classmate #2	Classmate #3	You
4:00 pm yesterday				
5:00 pm yesterday				
6:00 yesterday evening				
8:00 last night				
1:00 this morning				
6:00 this morning				
7:45 this morning				
8:15 this morning				
8:45 this morning				

## Exercise 3

### THE PAST PROGRESSIVE AND THE SIMPLE PAST

Make sentences using past progressive and simple past to describe the situation below. Follow the example given.

- Yesterday, the students at Kelvin High School were all busy doing things when the fire alarm rang.

1. 12th grade boys / play basketball / in the gym

*The 12th grade boys were playing basketball in the gym when the fire alarm rang.*

---

2. school choir / practice for the concert
- 

3. the 10th grade class / study Spanish
- 

4. principal / meet / with group of parents
- 

5. history teachers / discuss / final exam
- 

6. custodian / clean / girls' locker room
- 

7. the student council / discuss / graduation dance
- 

8. actors / rehearse / school play
-



## Exercise 4

Complete the following sentences using the correct form of the past progressive tense of the verbs provided in brackets.

1. They were standing on the corner when I saw them.  
(stand)
2. The sun \_\_\_\_\_ when I woke up this morning.  
(shine)
3. It \_\_\_\_\_ when I left the office.  
(rain)
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ dinner when you called me.  
(eat)
5. She got very sick while she \_\_\_\_\_ overseas.  
(travel)
6. Martin \_\_\_\_\_ in the garden when it started to rain.  
(work)
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ dinner when the phone rang.  
(cook)
8. Mr. Johnson cut himself while he \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(shave)
9. She fell asleep while she \_\_\_\_\_ the movie.  
(watch)
10. Andrea broke her ankle when she \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(skate)
11. While I \_\_\_\_\_ home, I saw a bad accident.  
(drive)
12. She found a ten dollar bill while she \_\_\_\_\_ home.  
(walk)
13. They \_\_\_\_\_ when the accident happened.  
(speed)
14. The baby \_\_\_\_\_ when we got home from the party.  
(sleep)
15. She broke a plate while she \_\_\_\_\_ the dishes.  
(do)
16. When you called, I \_\_\_\_\_ a shower.  
(take)
17. David met his neighbors while he \_\_\_\_\_ into his new apartment.  
(move)

## Exercise 5

### PAST PROGRESSIVE VS. SIMPLE PAST

Read each situation below and answer the following questions.  
Use your imagination to answer the questions in the simple past.

#### A. Dan

Dan was walking to work when it started to rain.

1. What was Dan doing when it started to rain?

*He was walking to work.*

---

2. What did Dan do when it started to rain?

*He opened his umbrella and ran to the bus stop.*

---

#### B. Maryann

Maryann was writing a letter to her boyfriend when the lights went out.

1. What was Maryann doing when the lights went out?

---

2. What did Maryann do when the lights went out?

---

#### C. Brenda

Brenda was cooking dinner when she saw a mouse on the kitchen floor.

1. What was Brenda doing when she saw the mouse?

---

2. What did Brenda do when she saw the mouse?

---

## Exercise 5 cont.

### D. Andrea

Last week Andrea was having coffee with her boyfriend when her boss walked into the café.

1. What was Andrea doing when her boss walked into the café?

---

2. What did Andrea do when her boss came into the café?

---

### E. Kevin

Kevin was painting the house when he fell off the ladder.

1. What was Kevin doing when he fell off the ladder?

---

2. What did Kevin do when he fell off the ladder?

---

### F. You

I was walking to work when I saw the car accident.

1. What were you doing when you saw the accident?

---

2. What did you do when you saw the accident?

---

## Exercise 6

## PAST PROGRESSIVE VS. SIMPLE PAST

Complete the following sentences using the correct form (past progressive or simple past) of the verbs provided in brackets.

1. He \_\_\_\_\_ (fall) off the ladder while he \_\_\_\_\_ (paint) the ceiling.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ (study) when I \_\_\_\_\_ (call) you last night?
3. They \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) very fast when the police officer \_\_\_\_\_ (stop) them.
4. While I \_\_\_\_\_ (drive) to work yesterday, I \_\_\_\_\_ (see) an accident.
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ (read) a great book last week.
6. My friends \_\_\_\_\_ (drop in) for a visit while I \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV last night.
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ (see) Andrea at the party last night.  
She \_\_\_\_\_ (wear) a beautiful dress.
8. The children \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to bed at 9:00 last night. At 10:00, they \_\_\_\_\_ (sleep).
9. We \_\_\_\_\_ (have) dinner at a new restaurant last night. While we \_\_\_\_\_ (eat), one of the waiters \_\_\_\_\_ (drop) a tray on the floor.

## Exercise 6 cont.

10. Monty \_\_\_\_\_ in his garage last night when he  
(work)  
\_\_\_\_\_ a loud noise. He \_\_\_\_\_  
(hear) (put)  
down his tools and \_\_\_\_\_ outside into the yard.  
(go)  
While he \_\_\_\_\_ around, someone \_\_\_\_\_  
(look) (run)  
out of his front door. Monty \_\_\_\_\_ the police.  
(call)  
He \_\_\_\_\_ the police that the robber  
(tell)  
\_\_\_\_\_ a black ski jacket and jeans.  
(wear)
11. When Sue \_\_\_\_\_ at the theater,  
(arrive)  
her friends \_\_\_\_\_ for her inside.  
(wait)
12. John \_\_\_\_\_ his leg while he \_\_\_\_\_ football.  
(break) (play)
13. Mr. Duncan \_\_\_\_\_ home last night while his wife  
(get)  
\_\_\_\_\_ dinner and the children \_\_\_\_\_ TV.  
(cook) (watch)
14. Paula \_\_\_\_\_ home yesterday because it \_\_\_\_\_ very heavily.  
(stay) (snow)

## Exercise 7

Write questions in the chart and interview your classmates.  
If a classmate answers “yes” to a question, write his or her name in the chart. Walk around the class and find someone...

#	Find someone...	Question	Classmate's Name
1	who was sleeping at 10:00 last night.		
2	who wasn't sleeping when his or her alarm clock rang this morning.		
3	who was sitting in the classroom when the teacher came in this morning.		
4	who was eating dinner last night when someone phoned.		
5	who was wearing earrings yesterday.		
6	who was chewing gum before class.		
7	who was doing homework at 9:30 last night.		
8	who was taking a bath at 10:00 last night.		
9	who was playing a sport at 8:00 last night.		
10	who was standing in the hall when the class began this morning.		

## Exercise 8

### QUIZ

Circle the correct answer.

1. When the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ my name, I was daydreaming.  
a) was calling  
b) called
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ here three years ago.  
a) was moving  
b) moved
3. Maria drove through a red light while she \_\_\_\_\_ on her phone.  
a) was talking  
b) talked
4. The children were running and \_\_\_\_\_ at the birthday party.  
a) playing  
b) played
5. Kate went to bed at 10:00 pm. At 11:00 pm, she \_\_\_\_\_ .  
a) was sleeping  
b) slept
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ my hand while I was frying an egg.  
a) was burning  
b) burnt
7. I was shoveling snow when I \_\_\_\_\_ my back.  
a) was hurting  
b) hurt
8. What time \_\_\_\_\_ you finish your homework?  
a) were  
b) did
9. I \_\_\_\_\_ the shoes that were on sale.  
a) wasn't buying  
b) didn't buy
10. Our neighbors were listening to loud music last night while we \_\_\_\_\_ .  
a) were studying  
b) studied

# Answer Key

## Exercise 1

### B. SENTENCES

- At 7:10 Mr. Anderson was taking a shower.
- At 7:15 Mrs. Anderson was getting ready for work.
- At 8:15 Mr. and Mrs. Anderson were eating breakfast.
- At 10:00 Mr. Anderson was writing emails.
- At 11:00 Mrs. Anderson was teaching history class.
- At 12:30 Mr. Anderson was eating lunch in a restaurant and Mrs. Anderson was eating lunch at work.
- At 1:30 Mrs. Anderson was teaching math class.
- At 3:30 Mrs. Anderson was exercising at the gym.
- At 4:30 Mr. Anderson was picking up the kids and Mrs. Anderson was buying groceries.
- At 8:00 Mr. and Mrs. Anderson were cleaning the apartment.
- At 12:30 am Mr. and Mrs. Anderson were sleeping.

## Exercise 2

Answers will vary.

## Exercise 3

- The 12th grade boys were playing basketball in the gym when the fire alarm rang.
- The school choir was practicing for the concert when the fire alarm rang.
- The 10th grade class was studying Spanish when the fire alarm rang.
- The principal was meeting with a group of parents when the fire alarm rang.
- The history teachers were discussing the final exam when the fire alarm rang.
- The custodian was cleaning the girls' locker room when the fire alarm rang.
- The student council was discussing the graduation dance when the fire alarm rang.
- The actors were rehearsing for the school play when the fire alarm rang.

## Exercise 4

- |                  |                 |                   |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. were standing | 7. was cooking  | 13. were speeding |
| 2. was shining   | 8. was shaving  | 14. was sleeping  |
| 3. was raining   | 9. was watching | 15. was doing     |
| 4. was eating    | 10. was skating | 16. was taking    |
| 5. was traveling | 11. was driving | 17. was moving    |
| 6. was working   | 12. was walking |                   |

## Exercise 5

### A. DAN

- He was walking to work.
- He opened his umbrella and ran to the bus stop.

### B. MARYANN

- She was writing a letter.
- Individual answer.

### C. BRENDA

- She was cooking dinner.
- Individual answer.

### D. ANDREA

- She was having coffee with her boyfriend.
- Individual answer.

### E. KEVIN

- He was painting the house.
- Individual answer.

### F. YOU

- I was walking to work.
- Individual answer.

*(continued on the next page...)*



## Answer Key cont.

### Exercise 6

1. fell, was painting
2. Were (you) studying, called
3. were driving, stopped
4. was driving, saw
5. read
6. dropped in, was watching
7. saw, was wearing
8. went, were sleeping
9. had, were eating, dropped
10. was working, heard, put, went, was looking,  
ran, called, told, was wearing
11. arrived, were waiting
12. broke, was playing
13. got, was cooking, were watching
14. stayed, was snowing

### Exercise 7

Answers will vary.

### Exercise 8

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. a | 5. a | 7. b | 9. b  |
| 2. b | 4. a | 6. b | 8. b | 10. a |

#### SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Traveling*, *Neighbors*, *Theater*, and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Travelling*, *Neighbours*, *Theatre*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.