

PAST SIMPLE VS PAST CONTINUOUS

PRESENTATION & EXERCISES

The following document contains a short description and a series of exercises for practicing the simple past and the past continuous tense in order to improve your knowledge of those grammar points

*Hasan BİLOKCUOĞLU
2014*

The past simple is used:

For an action that started and ended in the past.

**I saw a ghost last Friday.*

For a repeated action in the past.

When I was young, I watched lots of television every day after school.

**I always gave my mother flowers on her birthday.*

**(We could also say, I used to watch lots of television.)*

Certain Verbs

The following verbs are usually only used in Simple Past (not in the progressive form).

- **state:** be, cost, fit, mean, suit

Example: We were on holiday.

- **possession:** belong, have

Example: Sam had a cat.

- **senses:** feel, hear, see, smell, taste, touch
Example: He felt the cold.
- **feelings:** hate, hope, like, love, prefer, regret, want, wish
Example: Jane loved pizza.
- **brain work:** believe, know, think, understand
Example: I did not understand him.
- **introductory clauses for direct speech:** answer, ask, reply, say
Example: "I am watching TV," he said.

**He had a small cottage in the woods.*

**He wasn't afraid of ghosts.*

Regular past simple tense verbs end in **-ed**.

**I talked to my uncle yesterday.*

**I phoned my girlfriend this morning.*

Irregular past simple tense verbs do not end in **-ed**.

**You need to learn irregular past tense verbs.*

**I felt sick yesterday morning so I went to the doctor.*

The past continuous tense is used:

When talking about TWO actions in the past; one continues for a period, and the other starts and ends (past simple).

**While I was talking on the phone, someone stole my car.*

**I was making breakfast when the cat knocked over the milk carton, so I burnt the toast.*

These sentences usually use **while** or **when**.

To talk about TWO actions in the past, both happening over a period.

**I was working on my computer and my children were watching television.*

To talk about a **TEMPORARY** activity taking place over a limited time.

The past continuous tense is **was / were + the present participle**.

**I was living in Indooroopilly when it happened.*

**I was staying at my friend's house while my parents were touring Italy.*

(The present participle is the base of a **verb + ing** i.e. walk walking).

LET US NOW DO SOME ACTIVITIES 😊

ACTIVITY 1

Using the words in parentheses, complete the text below with the appropriate tenses

1. A: What (you, do) when the accident occurred?

B: I (try) to change a light bulb that had burnt out.

2. After I (find) the wallet full of money, I (go, immediately) to the police and (turn) it in.

3. The doctor (say) that Tom (be) too sick to go to work and that he (need) to stay at home for a couple of days.

4. Sebastian (arrive) at Susan's house a little before 9:00 PM, but she (be, not) there. She (study, at the library) for her final examination in French.

5. Sandy is in the living room watching television. At this time yesterday, she (watch, also) television. That's all she ever does!

6. A: I (call) you last night after dinner, but you (be, not) there. Where were you?

B: I (work) out at the fitness center.

7. When I (walk) into the busy office, the secretary (talk) on the phone with a customer, several clerks (work, busily) at their desks, and two managers (discuss, quietly) methods to improve customer service.

8. I (watch) a mystery movie on TV when the electricity went out. Now I am never going to find out how the movie ends.

9. Sharon (be) in the room when John told me what happened, but she didn't hear anything because she (listen, not) .

10. It's strange that you (call) because I (think, just) about you.

11. The Titanic (cross) the Atlantic when it
(strike) an iceberg.

12. When I entered the bazaar, a couple of merchants (bargain,
busily) and (try) to sell their
goods to naive tourists who (hunt) for souvenirs.
Some young boys (lead) their donkeys through the
narrow streets on their way home. A couple of men
(argue) over the price of a leather belt. I
(walk) over to a man who (sell) fruit
and (buy) a banana.

13. The firemen (rescue) the old woman who
(be) trapped on the third floor of the burning
building.

14. She was so annoying! She (leave, always)
her dirty dishes in the sink. I think she (expect,
actually) me to do them for her.

15. Samantha (live) in Berlin for more than two

years. In fact, she (live) there when the Berlin Wall came down.

ACTIVITY 2: READING



Read the story and answer the following questions.

A DISASTROUS DINNER

Last Friday, Mrs. Anderson planned to have a delicious dinner. She bought a T-bone steak and some cream and apples for an apple pie. When she came home from the shops she put her shopping on the table. While she was setting the table, her two pets sat underneath it and watched her. Then she went to the kitchen to make the pastry for the pie. She was a little forgetful so she didn't realize the steak, cream and apples were still on the table. While she was making the pastry, the dog jumped on a chair and looked longingly at the steak. At last it took the steak in its mouth and jumped off the chair, just as Mrs. Anderson was coming back into the dining room. Mrs. Anderson screamed, but the dog ran into the garden. She ran after the dog. While she was chasing the dog, the cat jumped on the table and started drinking the cream. Mrs. Anderson didn't manage to catch the dog, and she came back into the dining room. When she saw the cat, she shrieked, and the cat got such a fright that it jumped a meter into the air, and leapt out the window. Mrs. Anderson threw her broom at the cat, but she missed, and broke the window. At the same time she overbalanced and put her hand in the cream, spilling it all over the tablecloth. Poor Mrs. Anderson - she had no dinner, only a dirty tablecloth and a broken window.

Glossary: **set the table** - put knives and forks, plates, salt etc. on the table., **underneath** - under it., **longingly** - e.g. the dog wanted it but knew it couldn't have it., **shriek** - louder than

scream., **get a fright** - suddenly (not the same as be frightened)., **overbalance** - to lose your balance and fall.

Answer these questions about the story. Answer in complete sentences.

- 1. *What did Mrs. Anderson plan?*
.....
.....
.....
- 2. *Why did she buy cream and apples?*
.....
.....
.....
- 3. *When did her pets watch her?*
.....
.....
.....
- 4. *Where did she leave the steak?*
.....
.....
.....
- 5. *When did the dog jump on the chair?*
.....
.....
.....
- 6. *How did the dog look at the steak?*
.....
.....
.....
- 7. *When did the dog jump off the chair?*
.....
.....
.....
- 8. *Where did the dog go?*
.....
.....
.....
- 9. *What was she doing when the cat jumped on the table?*
.....
.....
.....
- 10. *What did Mrs. Anderson do when she saw the cat?*

ACTIVITY 3: SPEAKING- Video task 1 – When the screen went blank

While students are watching a video, the teacher suddenly presses the stop button. Students have to describe what was happening in as much detail as they can, and then check when the teacher presses play.

The video is available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP59tQf_njc

