

Past Continuous Tense

The past continuous tense, also known as the past progressive tense, refers to a continuing action or state that was happening at some point in the past. The past continuous tense is formed by:

Subject + (was/were) + (V + ing)

There are many situations in which this verb tense might be used in a sentence.

1- Describe conditions that existed in the past.

The sun was shining every day that summer.

As I spoke, the children were laughing at my cleverness.

2- Describe something that was happening continuously in the past when another action interrupted it.

My brother phoned me while I was eating.

I was making dinner when she arrived.

3- The past continuous can shed light on what was happening at a precise time in the past.

At 6 o'clock, I was eating dinner.

4- It can also refer to a habitual action in the past.

She was talking constantly in class in those days.

One final caution: Though the irregularities are few, not every verb is suited to describing a continuous action. Certain verbs can't be used in the past continuous tense. One common example is the verb to arrive.

At noon, he was arriving. Incorrect

At noon, he arrived. Correct