

Past Continuous - Structure

How do we make the past continuous tense in English?

Note: This is also called the **past progressive** tense.

Positive form

Use the **past simple of be** and the **verb-ing form**.

Note: There is no short form.

I was playing
you were playing
he was playing
she was playing
it was playing
we were playing
they were playing

For example:

- I **was having** dinner.
- He **was staying** at a hotel.
- They **were sitting** on a bench.

Negative form

Put **not** after the **past simple of be**.

Full form	Short forms
I was not playing	I wasn't playing
you were not playing	you weren't playing
he was not playing	he wasn't playing
she was not playing	she wasn't playing
it was not playing	it wasn't playing
we were not playing	we weren't playing
they were not playing	they weren't playing

For example:

- I **was not** studying.
- You **were not** listening.
- She **was not** sleeping.
- The internet **wasn't** working. (it wasn't working)
- We **weren't** watching TV.

Question forms

Like for questions with the past simple of **be**, invert the subject and the past simple of **be**, and then put a question word (**what, who**, etc.) at the beginning for wh- questions.

Yes/No questions	
	Was I playing ?
	Were you playing ?
	Was he playing ?
	Was she playing ?
	Was it playing ?
	Were we playing ?
	Were they playing ?

Wh- questions	
What Who Where When Why How etc.	was I playing ?
	were you playing ?
	was he playing ?
	was she playing ?
	was it playing ?
	were we playing ?
	were they playing ?

For example:

- Was it **raining**?
- Were we **cooking** dinner when he called?
- What was I **thinking**?
- How were you **feeling** after the exam?
- Where were they **going**?

Short answers

Positive	Negative
Yes, I was .	No, I wasn't .
Yes, you were .	No, you weren't .
Yes, he was .	No, he wasn't .
Yes, she was .	No, she wasn't .
Yes, it was .	No, it wasn't .
Yes, we were .	No, we weren't .
Yes, they were .	No, they weren't .

Note: We sometimes use full forms in negative short answers (e.g. No, I was not.), but this is rare and mainly used in very formal contexts or for emphasis.