

Past simple

We use the past simple to talk about actions and states which we see as completed in the past.

We can use it to talk about a specific point in time.

- She came back last Friday.
- I saw her in the street.
- They didn't agree to the deal.

It can also be used to talk about a period of time.

- She lived in Tokyo for seven years.
- They were in London from Monday to Thursday of last week.
- When I was living in New York, I went to all the art exhibitions I could.

You will often find the past simple used with time expressions such as these:

- Yesterday
- three weeks ago
- last year
- in 2002
- from March to June
- for a long time
- for 6 weeks
- in the 1980s
- in the last century
- in the past

The Past Continuous

The past continuous is usually used to refer to events happening at the same time that something important happened in the past.

*They were doing their homework when she arrived.
Jack was studying while Dave was cooking dinner..*

The past continuous is also used to express what was happening at a precise moment in the past.

I was attending a lecture at 2.30 yesterday afternoon.
Alice was reading a book at six yesterday evening.

Use

After another or at the same time?

Do you want to express that the actions in the past happened one after another or at the same time?

| Simple Past | Past Progressive |
|--|---|
| after another She came home, switched on the computer and checked her e-mails. | at the same time Simon was playing on the computer while his brother was watching TV. |

New action or already in progress?

If you want to express that a new action happened in the middle of another action, you need both tenses: Simple Past the new action and Past Progressive for the action already in progress.

| Simple Past | Past Progressive |
|--|---|
| new action My mobile rang (when I was sitting in a meeting.) | action already in progress While I was sitting in a meeting, (my mobile suddenly rang.) |

OXFORD

Oxford is a beautiful university town that is famous all over the world. The University of Oxford is the oldest university in Great Britain; it already existed in the 12th century. In the town centre there are many old buildings. There is also a museum where you can learn more about Oxford's history.



Grammar Exercise on the Text

Simple Past

We use the simple past for situations and actions in the past

Write the verbs in simple past.

1. The University of Oxford (be) _____ the first British university.
2. The lecturers of the colleges (speak) _____ a very clear English.
3. That's why Oxford English (become) _____ known as the English of educated people.
4. In the 19th century, Lewis Carroll (write) _____ 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' in Oxford.
5. Rowan Atkinson (Mr Bean) (study) _____ electrical engineering at Oxford.

Test your grammar

Put the verbs into the correct tense (Simple Past or Past Progressive).

1. While Tom (read) _____ Amely (watch) _____ a documentary on TV.

2. Marvin (come) _____ home, (switch) _____ on the computer and (check) _____ his emails.
3. The thief (sneak) _____ into the house, (steal) _____ the jewels and (leave) _____ without a trace.
4. Nobody (listen) _____ while the teacher (explain) _____ the tenses.
5. While we (do) _____ a sight-seeing tour, our friends (lie) _____ on the beach.
6. He (wake) _____ up and (look) _____ at his watch.

Make a dialogue using Past Simple and Past Continuous

1. A : - What (you / do) _____ when these people arrived ? Watching television ?
 2. B : - No, we (play) _____ cards with Mr Wilson, the neighbour.
 3. A : - But the woman (tell) _____ me you were watching television !
 4. B : That's a lie ! We (not watch) _____ television ! Ask Mr Wilson !
 5. He (want) _____ to leave when they came in.
 6. A : What (these people / say) _____ when they saw Mr Wilson ?
 7. B : ' We (walk) _____ past your house when we saw the light', they said, but we (not believe) _____ them.
 8. A : What (they / want) _____ do you think ?
 9. B : We don't know. First they (sit) _____ and watched us play but
 10. suddenly the woman (begin) _____ to cry.
 11. A : What about the man ? (he / do) _____ anything to comfort his wife ?
 12. B : Nothing. He didn't even notice. He (watch) _____ us play.
 13. A : Do you think these people (wait for) _____ some help ?
 14. B : Sorry, but we (not ask) _____ them anything... so they left.
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Look the text than do the books exercises on pages 18 and 19

Bjork was born on November 21, 1965, in Reykjavik, Iceland. Becoming the Iceland's best known musician and winning a best actress award at the Cannes Film Festival for the film *Dancer in the Dark* did not come without hard work. Young Bjork started her musical training by studying on the flute, piano and voice. She recorded her first album when she was just 11 years old. In the next eight years she played in three bands, and in 1981 worked on a TV programme, *Rock in Reykjavik*. She met Einar Orn and Sigtryggur Baldursson when she was recording a radio programme in 1984 and they started the band *Kukl* (which in Iceland means 'witchcraft').

Putt the verbs in brackets into the past simple or continuous

Last week I _____ (decide) to invite some friends to dinner. I _____ (buy) lots of delicious food, including some Parma ham and at about 6.00 I _____ (cook) in the kitchen. The sun _____ (shine) and it was a beautiful evening, so, I _____ (open) the back door. Then the telephone _____ (ring). I _____ (go) to answer it and when I _____ (come) back the ham wasn't on the table. I _____ (look) out of the window. A cat _____ (sit) on my garden wall and it _____ (eat) my ham. What _____ (can) I do? I _____ (fill) a pan with water and I went quietly outside. The cat _____ (not look) in my direction and it _____ (enjoy) the ham so much that it _____ (not hear) me. I _____ (walk) slowly up to it, I _____ (want) to empty the water over its head . A bit cruel I know but the ham _____ (be) very expensive but at the last moment the cat heard me and _____ (escape) in the neighborhood.
