

Lesson Plan: Past continuous

Level: Intermediate (B1)

Time: 60–75 minutes

Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Form the past continuous correctly (**was/were + verb-ing**)
- Use it to describe:
 - Actions in progress at a specific time in the past
 - Background actions interrupted by the past simple
- Speak and write about past events with improved accuracy

Target Language

Form:

- Affirmative: *I was studying. / They were watching TV.*
- Negative: *I wasn't sleeping. / We weren't listening.*
- Question: *Was she working? / Were you driving?*

Use:

- *At 8 p.m. last night, I was doing my homework.*
- *I was walking home when it started to rain.*

Materials

- Whiteboard / slides
- Timeline on board
- Worksheet (gap-fill + sentence matching)
- Optional: picture or short silent video clip

Lesson Procedure

1. Warm-up (10 minutes)

Aim: Activate background knowledge and context

- Write on the board:

"What were you doing at 9 p.m. last night?"

- Students think individually, then discuss in pairs.

- Elicit a few answers and write correct examples on the board.

→ Don't correct everything yet—focus on meaning.

2. Presentation (15 minutes)

Aim: Clarify form and use

a) Context

Tell a short story:

"Yesterday at 7 p.m., I was cooking dinner. My phone rang. My friend was asking for help."

Ask concept questions:

- Was the action finished at 7 p.m.? (No)
- Was it happening over a period of time? (Yes)

b) Form

Write on the board:

Past Continuous

Subject + **was / were + verb-ing**

Examples:

I was studying

They were playing

She wasn't listening

Were you working?

Highlight:

was → I / he / she / it

were → you / we / they

c) Use (with timeline)

Draw a timeline and show:

- Action in progress at a specific past time
- Background action interrupted by past simple

3. Controlled practice (10–15 minutes)

Aim: Build accuracy

Activity 1: Fill in the gaps

Students complete sentences:

1. At 6 p.m., we ____ (have) dinner.
2. She ____ (not / watch) TV.
3. ____ you ____ (drive) when the accident happened?

Check answers as a class.

Activity 2: Choose the correct tense

Students choose **past simple or past continuous**:

- I **was studying / studied** when you called.
- They **were playing / played** football at 5 p.m.

4. Semi-controlled practice (10 minutes)

Aim: Connect form with meaning

Picture or Video Activity

- Show a picture of a busy scene or pause a silent video.
- Ask:

What was happening?

What were the people doing?

Students write 4–5 sentences using the past continuous.

5. Free practice (15 minutes)

Aim: Encourage fluency and communication

Activity: "Interrupted story"

- Students work in pairs.
- Student A describes a background action using past continuous:
I was walking through the park...
- Student B interrupts using past simple:
...when you saw a dog.

Students switch roles and create new stories.

6. Feedback & error correction (5–10 minutes)

- Write common mistakes on the board (anonymously).
- Students correct them together.
- Review:
 1. Form
 2. When to use past continuous vs past simple

Optional Homework

- Write a short paragraph (80–100 words):
"What were you doing when something unexpected happened?"
- Or: Complete a worksheet combining past continuous and past simple.