

Simple Past vs Past Continuous

A2 Elementary · Lesson 3 · Student Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 56

Exercise 1 · Which Tense? (8 points)

Read each sentence. Circle **Simple Past** or **Past Continuous**.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. The birds were flying south when the cold weather arrived. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |
| 2. She knocked on the door and waited. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |
| 3. We were eating lunch when the fire alarm went off. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |
| 4. He climbed to the top of the hill and looked out. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |
| 5. The children were swimming in the pool all afternoon. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |
| 6. She wrote three emails before breakfast. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |
| 7. The plants were growing quickly during the warm summer. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |
| 8. They danced until midnight at the wedding. | Simple Past / Past Continuous |

Exercise 2 · Multiple Choice (8 points)

Circle the correct verb form.

- We ____ dinner when the guests arrived early.
ate / were eating / was eating
- She ____ on the door three times but nobody answered.
was knocking / knocked / knock
- He ____ the tree when his foot slipped.
was climbing / climbed / was climb
- While they ____ in the sea, a dolphin appeared.
swam / were swimming / was swimming
- She ____ a letter to her sister every Sunday last year.
was writing / wrote / was wrote
- The roses ____ beautifully while the weather stayed warm.
grew / were growing / was growing
- A large flock of birds ____ overhead while we watched.

flew / were flying / was flying

8. They ____ all evening and only stopped when the music ended.

were dancing / danced / dance

Exercise 3 · Matching (8 points)

Match each sentence (1–8) to its meaning (a–h). Write the letter in the box.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. We were eating when the alarm went off. | [____] |
| 2. She knocked and opened the door. | [____] |
| 3. He was climbing when his foot slipped. | [____] |
| 4. While they were swimming, a storm began. | [____] |
| 5. She wrote ten pages before lunch. | [____] |
| 6. The plants were growing fast all summer. | [____] |
| 7. A bird flew into the window and fell. | [____] |
| 8. They were dancing when we arrived. | [____] |

g. Two completed actions that happened one immediately after the other.

b. Two quick completed actions that happened one after the other.

d. A background activity was happening when the weather changed.

h. An activity was already in progress when we got there.

f. A continuous process that went on throughout a whole period.

e. A completed task finished before a specific point in time.

c. An activity in progress was interrupted by a sudden problem.

a. A meal in progress was suddenly interrupted by an unexpected event.

Exercise 4 · Gap Fill (8 points)

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. We _____ when someone knocked loudly at the door. (*eat*)
2. She _____ twice and then pushed the door open. (*knock*)
3. He _____ the ladder when he lost his balance. (*climb*)
4. They _____ when the lifeguard blew the whistle. (*swim*)
5. She _____ in her diary every evening last year. (*write*)
6. The plants _____ so fast we could almost see them change. (*grow*)
7. A large bird _____ into the garden and landed on the fence. (*fly*)
8. They _____ when the lights suddenly went out. (*dance*)

Exercise 5 · Word Order (8 points)

Put the words in the correct order to make a sentence.

1. We / were / eating / when / the / alarm / went / off

2. She / knocked / on / the / door / and / waited

3. He / was / climbing / the / tree / when / he / slipped

4. While / they / were / swimming / a / storm / began

5. She / wrote / three / emails / before / breakfast

6. The / plants / were / growing / quickly / all / summer

7. A / bird / flew / into / the / window / and / fell

8. They / were / dancing / when / we / arrived

Exercise 6 · Word Sort (8 points)

Write each sentence in the correct column.

A flock of birds ____ overhead just as it started to snow. • They ____ their dinner when the phone rang. • She ____ in her notebook while she waited for the bus. • The garden ____ wild while the owners were on holiday. • She ____ on the door and walked straight in. • They ____ together at every family party for years. • He ____ carefully when a branch broke beneath him. • The children ____ happily while their parents sat nearby.

Action in progress	Completed action

Exercise 7 · Complete the Conversation (8 points)

Choose the correct word from the brackets to complete each gap.

Lara: What (were / did / was) you (doing / did / done) when I called yesterday?

Ben: I (was eating / ate / eat) lunch. We (were sitting / sat / sit) in the garden.

Lara: Nice! (Was / Were / Did) it sunny? I (saw / was seeing / see) some birds (flying / flew / fly) past my window earlier.

Ben: Yes, beautiful. While we (were eating / ate / eat), a huge bird (landed / was landing / land) right on the table!

Lara: No! What (did / were / was) you do?

Ben: My sister (was writing / wrote / write) a message on her phone, so she (knocked / was knocking / knock) it off the table by accident!

TEACHER ANSWER KEY — DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS

Simple Past vs Past Continuous · A2 Lesson 3

This answer key is for teacher use only.

Exercise 1 · Which Tense? — Answers

1. The birds were flying south when the cold weather arrived. → **PC**
2. She knocked on the door and waited. → **SP**
3. We were eating lunch when the fire alarm went off. → **PC**
4. He climbed to the top of the hill and looked out. → **SP**
5. The children were swimming in the pool all afternoon. → **PC**
6. She wrote three emails before breakfast. → **SP**
7. The plants were growing quickly during the warm summer. → **PC**
8. They danced until midnight at the wedding. → **SP**

Exercise 2 · Multiple Choice — Answers

1. **were eating**
2. **knocked**
3. **was climbing**
4. **were swimming**
5. **wrote**
6. **were growing**
7. **were flying**
8. **were dancing**

Exercise 3 · Matching — Answers

1. We were eating when the alarm went off. → **a**
2. She knocked and opened the door. → **b**
3. He was climbing when his foot slipped. → **c**
4. While they were swimming, a storm began. → **d**
5. She wrote ten pages before lunch. → **e**
6. The plants were growing fast all summer. → **f**
7. A bird flew into the window and fell. → **g**
8. They were dancing when we arrived. → **h**

Exercise 4 · Gap Fill — Answers

1. We **were eating** when someone knocked loudly at the door.
2. She **knocked** twice and then pushed the door open.
3. He **was climbing** the ladder when he lost his balance.
4. They **were swimming** when the lifeguard blew the whistle.
5. She **wrote** in her diary every evening last year.
6. The plants **were growing** so fast we could almost see them change.
7. A large bird **flew** into the garden and landed on the fence.
8. They **were dancing** when the lights suddenly went out.

Exercise 5 · Word Order — Answers

1. We were eating when the alarm went off .
2. She knocked on the door and waited .
3. He was climbing the tree when he slipped .
4. While they were swimming a storm began .
5. She wrote three emails before breakfast .
6. The plants were growing quickly all summer .
7. A bird flew into the window and fell .
8. They were dancing when we arrived .

Exercise 6 · Word Sort — Answers

Action in progress	Completed action
They ___ their dinner when the phone rang.	She ___ on the door and walked straight in.
He ___ carefully when a branch broke beneath him.	A flock of birds ___ overhead just as it started to snow.
The children ___ happily while their parents sat nearby.	They ___ together at every family party for years.
She ___ in her notebook while she waited for the bus.	
The garden ___ wild while the owners were on holiday.	

Exercise 7 · Conversation — Answers

Lara: What **were** you **doing** when I called yesterday?

Ben: I **was eating** lunch. We **were sitting** in the garden.

Lara: Nice! **Was** it sunny? I **saw** some birds **flying** past my window earlier.

Ben: Yes, beautiful. While we **were eating**, a huge bird **landed** right on the table!

Lara: No! What **did** you do?

Ben: My sister **was writing** a message on her phone, so she **knocked** it off the table by accident!