

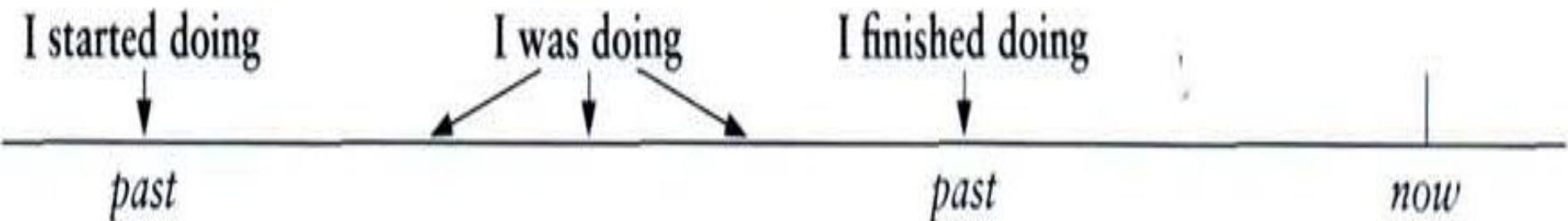
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# *The Past*

# *Continuous Tense*

# was/were + V-ing

I was doing something = I was in the middle of doing something at a certain time. The action or situation had already started before this time, but had not finished:



- This time last year I was living in Brazil.
- What were you doing at 10 o'clock last night?
- I waved to Helen, but she wasn't looking.

Compare the *past continuous* (I was doing) and *past simple* (I did):

*Past continuous* (in the middle of an action)

- I was walking home when I met Dave.  
(in the middle of an action)
- Kate was watching television when we arrived.

*Past simple* (complete action)

- I walked home after the party last night.  
(= all the way, completely)
- Kate watched television a lot when she was ill last year.

Some verbs (for example, **know** and **want**) are not normally used in the continuous (see Unit 4A):

- We were good friends. We **knew** each other well. (*not* We were knowing)
- I was enjoying the party, but Chris **wanted** to go home. (*not* was wanting)



We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to say that something happened in the middle of something else:

- Matt **phoned** while we **were having** dinner.
- It **was raining** when I got up.
- I **saw** you in the park yesterday. You **were sitting** on the grass and **reading** a book.
- I **hurt** my back while I **was working** in the garden.

But we use the past simple to say that one thing happened after another:

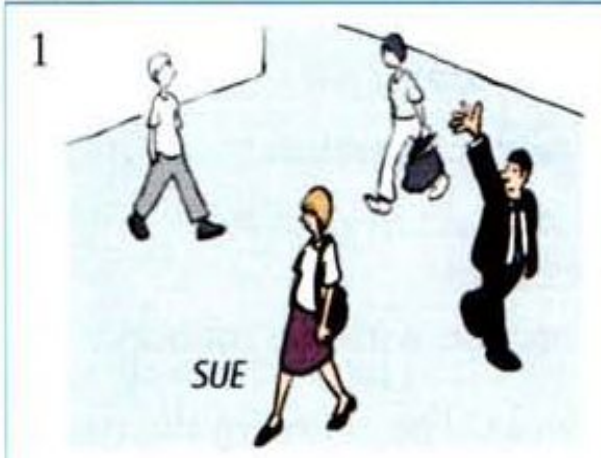
- I **was walking** along the road when I **saw** Dave. So I **stopped**, and we **had** a chat.

Compare:

- When Karen arrived, we **were having** dinner. (= we had already started before she arrived)

- When Karen arrived, we **had** dinner. (= Karen arrived, and then we had dinner)

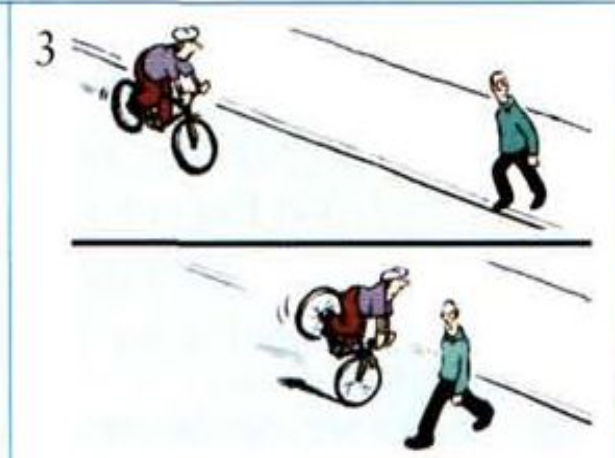
Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.



I saw (see) Sue in town yesterday, but she ..... (not / see) me. She ..... (look) the other way.



I ..... (meet) Tom and Jane at the airport a few weeks ago. They ..... (go) to Paris and I ..... (go) to Rome. We ..... (have) a chat while we ..... (wait) for our flights.



I ..... (cycle) home yesterday when a man ..... (step) out into the road in front of me. I ..... (go) quite fast, but luckily I ..... (manage) to stop in time and ..... (not / hit) him.



