

PRACTICAL ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONALS

LESSON 24

PAST SIMPLE VS. PAST CONTINUOUS

| PAST SIMPLE | |
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| We use the simple <u>past to describe single completed actions in the past.</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Julius Caesar invaded Britain in 55BC |
| We use the simple past <u>for actions which happened at the same time and also for repeated actions.</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When we got to the junction I took the left turn while Micky took the right. My brother applied for a visa six times before he got one. |
| We use the simple past <u>for sequences of actions</u> : the actions follow immediately after each other, or one action causes a result. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silverman ran to the car, jumped in and raced off into the night. Wall Street traders lost a fortune when the Asian markets collapsed. |
| We use the simple past <u>to describe states in the past.</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We lived just outside Oxford in the nineties, but we didn't have a car. |
| PAST CONTINUOUS | |
| We use the past continuous <u>to describe an action in progress at a point of time in the past.</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We didn't hear the intruder because we were sleeping on the top floor that night. |
| We use the past continuous <u>to contrast an ongoing action with a single event which interrupts it.</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elizabeth was hunting when the messengers arrived with the news. |
| We can use the past continuous <u>to describe past arrangements.</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary was taking the next flight to Paris so she had to cut short the interview. |

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Complete the sentences below by putting the verb in brackets in the past simple or past continuous.

1. I _____ (stand) at the bus stop when I _____ (see) the speeding car slam into the lamp post.
2. The icy wind _____ (blow) through the trees as we _____ (set off) on our journey into the forest.
3. Brad _____ (feel) exhausted so he _____ (collapse) onto the sofa, _____ (press) the button on the remote control and _____ (settle down) for an evening vegetating in front of the box.
4. The twins _____ (spend) the afternoon shopping because they _____ (cook) for their flatmates that evening.
5. Unfortunately for us, we _____ (live) on the wrong side of Miami when Hurricane Andrew _____ (hit) the city.
6. Share prices _____ (soar) when the government _____ (announce) record growth figures.
7. I _____ (get up) early in the morning so I _____ (decide) to have an early night.
8. They say that he _____ (leave) her because he found out that she _____ (have) an affair with his best friend.
9. My younger brother _____ (take) the driving test five times before he _____ (manage) to pass.
10. I _____ (run into) Clare at the supermarket the other day and she _____ (mention) that you might be looking for work.