Past Progressive

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Quick and Handy Grammar Review

THE PAST PROGRESSIVE

A. Function 1

The main function of the past progressive (also called the past continuous) is to show a continuing (long) action getting interrupted by a short past action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Past Progressive (Main Use)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Markers</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>when, while</td>
<td>• I was eating dinner when he called me last night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When he called me last night, I was eating dinner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Form was / were + -ing verb

Function Two actions occurred in the past. The first (long) action is interrupted by the second (short) action.

NOTES

1. When forming the past progressive in English, the independent clause uses was / were + -ing verb and the dependent clause takes the simple past. Remember that the dependent clause can come before or after the independent clause. When a sentence begins with a dependent clause, use a comma.

   • We were playing soccer when the storm hit.
   • When the storm hit, we were playing soccer.

2. Some verbs are common as short actions, and knowing them will help you identify if a sentence needs the past progressive. These verbs include called, rang, arrived, came, landed, hit, and went out.

   • They were studying when the bell rang.
   • She was driving when she hit a tree.
Quick and Handy Grammar Review cont.

B. Function 2

A secondary function of the past progressive is to emphasize that two long, continuing actions happened at the same time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Past Progressive (Secondary Use)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagram</td>
<td>![Diagram]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was daydreaming.</td>
<td>You were talking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You were talking.</td>
<td>I was daydreaming.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples**

- I was daydreaming while you were talking.
- You were talking while I was daydreaming.

**Form**

was / were + -ing verb

**Function**

Two long actions occurred at the same time in the past.

**Time Markers**

when, while

**NOTE**

It is also possible to use the past progressive to emphasize only one long past action.

- We were studying all night.
- The children were crying loudly.
- I was sitting on the edge of my seat during the movie.
- He was still playing the guitar at 11:00 pm.
- At 8:00 pm my brothers were doing their homework.
Quick and Handy Grammar Review cont.

C. The Simple Past Vs. The Past Progressive

The simple past is used to show a finished past action. Compare the two tenses using the diagram below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Simple Past</th>
<th>Past Progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagram</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗ ✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>REGULAR VERBS: verb + -ed</td>
<td>was / were + -ing verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRREGULAR VERBS: various changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>A defined past action</td>
<td>A long past action interrupted by a short past action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(you know when the action occurred)</td>
<td>Two long past actions occurring at the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Markers</td>
<td>• yesterday</td>
<td>• when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the day before yesterday</td>
<td>• while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• last</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• when</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>I studied for the test last night.</td>
<td>She was brushing her teeth when the power went out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They were listening to music when they were driving.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 1

THE ANDERSONS’ VERY FULL DAY

The Andersons had a very busy day yesterday. Look at the schedule below and then complete the sentences in Part B.

A. Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Mr. Anderson</th>
<th>Mrs. Anderson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 – 7:15</td>
<td>showered</td>
<td>got ready for work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15 – 7:20</td>
<td>made breakfast for kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 – 8:30</td>
<td>ate breakfast</td>
<td>ate breakfast at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 12:00</td>
<td>wrote emails</td>
<td>taught history class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 1:00</td>
<td>ate lunch in a restaurant</td>
<td>ate lunch at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 – 2:00</td>
<td>met with boss</td>
<td>taught math class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 – 3:00</td>
<td>met with sales manager</td>
<td>met with principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 – 4:00</td>
<td>wrote reports</td>
<td>exercised at gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 – 5:00</td>
<td>picked up kids</td>
<td>bought groceries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 – 6:00</td>
<td>took kids to tennis</td>
<td>made dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 – 7:00</td>
<td>ate dinner</td>
<td>ate dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 – 9:00</td>
<td>cleaned apartment</td>
<td>cleaned apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 11:00</td>
<td>watched a movie</td>
<td>watched a movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>fell asleep</td>
<td>fell asleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 1 cont.

B. Sentences

1. At 7:10 Mr. Anderson was taking a shower
2. At 7:15 Mrs. Anderson
3. At 8:15 Mr. and Mrs. Anderson
4. At 10:00 Mr. Anderson
5. At 11:00 Mrs. Anderson
6. At 12:30 Mr. Anderson and Mrs. Anderson
7. At 1:30 Mrs. Anderson
8. At 3:30 Mrs. Anderson
9. At 4:30 Mr. Anderson and Mrs. Anderson
10. At 8:00 Mr. and Mrs. Anderson
11. At 12:30 am Mr. and Mrs. Anderson
Exercise 2

CLASS SURVEY

Interview the classmates in your group. Find out what they were doing at the specific times mentioned and complete the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Classmate #1</th>
<th>Classmate #2</th>
<th>Classmate #3</th>
<th>You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:00 pm yesterday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 pm yesterday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 yesterday evening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 last night</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 this morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 this morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45 this morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15 this morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 this morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 3

THE PAST PROGRESSIVE AND THE SIMPLE PAST

Make sentences using past progressive and simple past to describe the situation below. Follow the example given.

• Yesterday, the students at Kelvin High School were all busy doing things when the fire alarm rang.

1. 12th grade boys / play basketball / in the gym  
   The 12th grade boys were playing basketball in the gym when the fire alarm rang.

2. school choir / practise for the concert

3. the 10th grade class / study Spanish

4. principal / meet / with group of parents

5. history teachers / discuss / final exam

6. custodian / clean / girls' locker room

7. the student council / discuss / graduation dance

8. actors / rehearse / school play
Exercise 4

Complete the following sentences using the correct form of the past progressive tense of the verbs provided in brackets.

1. They ___________ were standing (stand) on the corner when I saw them.
2. The sun ___________ (shine) when I woke up this morning.
3. It ___________ (rain) when I left the office.
4. I ___________ (eat) dinner when you called me.
5. She got very sick while she ___________ (travel) overseas.
6. Martin ___________ (work) in the garden when it started to rain.
7. I ___________ (cook) dinner when the phone rang.
8. Mr. Johnson cut himself while he ___________ (shave).
9. She fell asleep while she ___________ (watch) the movie.
10. Andrea broke her ankle when she ___________ (skate).
11. While I ___________ (drive) home, I saw a bad accident.
12. She found a ten dollar bill while she ___________ (walk) home.
13. They ___________ (speed) when the accident happened.
14. The baby ___________ (sleep) when we got home from the party.
15. She broke a plate while she ___________ (do) the dishes.
16. When you called, I ___________ (take) a shower.
17. David met his neighbours while he ___________ (move) into his new apartment.
Exercise 5

PAST PROGRESSIVE VS. SIMPLE PAST

Read each situation below and answer the following questions. Use your imagination to answer the questions in the simple past.

A. Dan

Dan was walking to work when it started to rain.

1. What was Dan doing when it started to rain?  
   *He was walking to work.*

2. What did Dan do when it started to rain?  
   *He opened his umbrella and ran to the bus stop.*

B. Maryann

Maryann was writing a letter to her boyfriend when the lights went out.

1. What was Maryann doing when the lights went out?  

2. What did Maryann do when the lights went out?  

C. Brenda

Brenda was cooking dinner when she saw a mouse on the kitchen floor.

1. What was Brenda doing when she saw the mouse?  

2. What did Brenda do when she saw the mouse?  

Exercise 5 cont.

D. Andrea

Last week Andrea was having coffee with her boyfriend when her boss walked into the café.

1. What was Andrea doing when her boss walked into the café?

2. What did Andrea do when her boss came into the café?

E. Kevin

Kevin was painting the house when he fell off the ladder.

1. What was Kevin doing when he fell off the ladder?

2. What did Kevin do when he fell off the ladder?

F. You

I was walking to work when I saw the car accident.

1. What were you doing when you saw the accident?

2. What did you do when you saw the accident?
Exercise 6

PAST PROGRESSIVE VS. SIMPLE PAST

Complete the following sentences using the correct form (past progressive or simple past) of the verbs provided in brackets.

1. He ______________________ off the ladder while he ______________________ the ceiling.
   (fall) (paint)

2. ______________________ you ______________________ when I ______________________ you last night?
   (study) (call)

3. They ______________________ very fast when the police officer ______________________ them.
   (drive) (stop)

4. While I ______________________ to work yesterday, I ______________________ an accident.
   (drive) (see)

5. I ______________________ a great book last week.
   (read)

6. My friends ______________________ for a visit while I ______________________ TV last night.
   (drop in) (watch)

7. I ______________________ Andrea at the party last night.
   (see)

   She ______________________ a beautiful dress.
   (wear)

8. The children ______________________ to bed at 9:00 last night. At 10:00, they ______________________ .
   (go) (sleep)

9. We ______________________ dinner at a new restaurant last night. While we
   ______________________, one of the waiters ______________________ a tray on the floor.
   (have) (eat) (drop)
Exercise 6 cont.

10. Monty ____________________ in his garage last night when he ____________________ a loud noise. He ____________________ down his tools and ____________________ outside into the yard.

While he ____________________ around, someone ____________________ out of his front door. Monty ____________________ the police.

He ____________________ the police that the robber ____________________ a black ski jacket and jeans.

11. When Sue ____________________ at the theatre, her friends ____________________ for her inside.

12. John ____________________ his leg while he ____________________ football.

13. Mr. Duncan ____________________ home last night while his wife ____________________ dinner and the children ____________________ TV.

14. Paula ____________________ home yesterday because it ____________________ very heavily.
## Exercise 7

Write questions in the chart and interview your classmates. If a classmate answers “yes” to a question, write his or her name in the chart. Walk around the class and find someone...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Find someone...</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Classmate’s Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>who was sleeping at 10:00 last night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>who wasn’t sleeping when his or her alarm clock rang this morning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>who was sitting in the classroom when the teacher came in this morning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>who was eating dinner last night when someone phoned.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>who was wearing earrings yesterday.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>who was chewing gum before class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>who was doing homework at 9:30 last night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>who was taking a bath at 10:00 last night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>who was playing a sport at 8:00 last night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>who was standing in the hall when the class began this morning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>