

SIMPLE PAST VERSUS PAST CONTINUOUS

USE

SIMPLE PAST	PAST CONTINUOUS
<p>The simple past is used to express</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an action that started and finished at a specific time in the past; I e-mailed my professor before class. We talked about the assignment after class. chronological actions in the past. First, I e-mailed my professor; then, I went to the mall. I saw my professor at the mall and tried to hide. 	<p>The past continuous is used to express</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an action that was in progress at a specific time in the past; Christine was updating her Facebook page at 7:17 p.m. Christine and Caroline were chatting from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. simultaneous actions in the past; Christine was updating her Facebook page and listening to music. We were updating our Facebook pages while chatting to one another. a background action. It was raining that night. They were texting on their cellphones.
<p>The simple past and past continuous are used together to express an interrupted action in the past. The simple past expresses the interruption, whereas the past continuous expresses the action that was interrupted.</p> <p>While Christine was updating her Facebook page, she received a text from Stephan. When Christine received a text from Stephan, she was updating her Facebook page.</p>	

Expressions

- Simple past: *ago (a month ago, two weeks ago), before, earlier, in 2005, last (last night, last Tuesday), yesterday*
- Past continuous: *as, at 7:17 p.m., at noon/midnight, at the same time as, when, while*

FORM

SIMPLE PAST	PAST CONTINUOUS
AFFIRMATIVE	
<p>Regular verbs not ending in <i>e</i>, add <i>-ed</i>.</p> <p>Regular verbs ending in <i>e</i>, add <i>-d</i>.</p> <p>The professor e-mailed me about missing class.</p> <p>The students liked their last assignment.</p>	<p>Past tense of auxiliary <i>to be (was/were)</i> + present participle (base form of verb + <i>-ing</i>)</p> <p>Stephan was teaching at the CEGEP in 2010.</p> <p>Stephan and Christine were teaching at the CEGEP in 2010.</p>
NEGATIVE	
<p>Auxiliary <i>did</i> + <i>not</i> + base form of verb</p> <p>I did not reply to my friend's e-mail.</p> <p>I didn't think it was necessary to reply.</p>	<p>Past tense of auxiliary <i>to be (was/were)</i> + <i>not</i> + present participle (base form of verb + <i>-ing</i>)</p> <p>Stephan was not teaching at the CEGEP yesterday.</p> <p>Stephan and Christine weren't teaching at the CEGEP yesterday.</p>
INTERROGATIVE	
<p>Auxiliary <i>did</i> + subject + base form of verb</p> <p>(Remember not to conjugate the main verb.)</p> <p>Did your professor see you at the mall?</p> <p>Did you talk for a long time?</p>	<p>Past tense of auxiliary <i>to be (was/were)</i> + subject + present participle (base form of verb + <i>-ing</i>)</p> <p>Was Stephan teaching at the CEGEP in 2009?</p> <p>Were you studying there at the time?</p>

FYI

- *When* is used with the past tense to indicate an interruption in the past continuous. Example: I was walking in the mall **when** I bumped into my professor.
- *While* or *when* is used with the past continuous to indicate simultaneous actions. Example: You were sleeping **while/when** I was working.
- In past tense negative questions, *not* is commonly contracted with the auxiliary *did*. Example: **Didn't** you go? (Rather than the more formal *Did you not go?*)

Exceptions

- The verb *to be* does not require the auxiliary *did* in the negative and interrogative forms of the simple past. Examples: It **wasn't** necessary to reply to the e-mail. **Were** you at the mall yesterday?
- Non-action verbs cannot be used in the past continuous. Instead, they are used in the simple past. (Refer to Appendix A, on page 135, for a list of non-action verbs.)
- If the verb ends with the letter *y* preceded by a consonant, remove the *y* and add *-ied* to the base form of the verb in the simple past. Example: I **applied** to several colleges.
- Many verbs have an irregular past form. (Refer to Appendix B, on page 137, for a list of irregular verbs.) Examples: Jason **spoke** to his professor after class. They **met** in the library.

EXERCISE 1

Fill in the blanks with the form of the verb given in parentheses.

1. Last year, Étienne (go, simple past) _____ to Collège de Maisonneuve in Montréal. He (study, past cont.) _____ to be an Intervention and Corrections officer. Étienne (enjoy, simple past, neg.) _____ his internship because he (take, past cont.) _____ both the metro and a bus to get there. He (hope, past cont.) _____ to be placed closer to his home.

2. Christine and Stephan (work, past cont.) _____
_____ on their resumé when Caroline (call, simple past) _____.
3. (find, simple past, interr.) _____ you _____
the job you (look, past cont.) _____ for?
4. Étienne (apply, simple past) _____ for a job at the
Laval Detention Centre.
5. (call, past cont., interr.) _____ Caroline _____
from her cellphone?

EXERCISE 2

Last night, someone uploaded a video to the Internet of Professor Blake dancing with a lampshade on his head. Principal Frey wants to know who is responsible.

Complete the conversion using the appropriate tense: simple past or past continuous.

Principal Frey: Samuel, what (do) _____ you
_____ at 8:47 last night?

Samuel: I (study) _____ for my math
quiz at the library, but I (see) _____
Marie-Claude there, and she (have)
_____ a really strange look on her face.

Marie-Claude: Impossible! I (go, neg.) _____ to
the library last night. In fact, I (leave, neg.) _____
_____ the house after 6:00 p.m.



Pierre: Then, why (answer, neg., interr.) _____
you _____ the phone when I (call)
_____? I (try) _____ to reach
you all night!

Marie-Claude: I (want, neg.) _____ to
answer it. I (sleep) _____.

The mystery continues!

COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY **Mystery Video**

- Form a group of four (or five) students. Create a skit to continue the dialogue in Exercise 2. Decide among yourselves who will assume the roles of Principal Frey, Samuel, Marie-Claude and Pierre. (If you have an extra group member, this student can play Professor Blake.) Use the simple past and past continuous in your dialogue.
- Once your skit is complete, perform it in front of another group of students or the class, but do not reveal who uploaded the video of Professor Blake. Have your audience ask questions in the simple past and past continuous to try and guess who is responsible.
- Here are a few things you will need to know before you begin:
 1. Marie-Claude was not at home last night.
 2. Principal Frey does not like Professor Blake.
 3. Samuel didn't really see Marie-Claude at the library last night.
 4. Pierre was at the library last night.