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The file: Simple Past vs Past Continuous

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2D

Grammar

Contrast: past simple and past continuous

I can distinguish the use of the past simple and the past continuous.

1 Choose the correct tense to complete the sentences.

- Jake looked at the weather outside: it was grey, but it **didn't rain / wasn't raining**.
- You didn't answer when I phoned you this morning. What **did you do / were you doing**?
- Lucy switched off her computer, **put on / was putting on** her coat and **left / was leaving** the office.
- She closed the window because some children **made / were making** a lot of noise outside.
- When I told my friends about the robbery, they **didn't believe / weren't believing** me.
- She didn't hear the doorbell because she **had / was having** a shower.

2 Complete the sentences. Use the past simple form of one verb and the past continuous form of the other.

- I _____ (see) Henry as I _____ (cycle) to the sports centre.
- While we _____ (prepare) the picnic, it _____ (start) to rain.
- All my friends _____ (leave) the party when I _____ (arrive).
- As we _____ (walk) by the river, we _____ (hear) a shout.
- We _____ (not eat) very much while we _____ (stay) in that hotel.
- I _____ (drink) my dad's coffee while he _____ (not look).
- She _____ (drop) her new phone as she _____ (put) it in her pocket.
- I _____ (meet) a really interesting person while I _____ (wait) for the bus.

3 Complete the text with the past simple or past continuous form of the verbs in brackets.

In January 2014, a doctor from New Zealand ¹had (have) a frightening experience with a shark – but his calm reaction ²_____ (make) him the star of news reports around the world.

James Grant ³_____ (fish) with friends one Saturday when a shark attacked him. He ⁴_____ (not see) anything, but he ⁵_____ (felt) a sudden pain in his leg. At first, he thought that his friends ⁶_____ (play) a prank on him. He ⁷_____ (turn) around – but nobody ⁸_____ (be) behind him. Then he ⁹_____ (realise) what ¹⁰_____ (happen).

4 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first.

- I hurt my finger while I was playing the guitar.
I was playing the guitar when I hurt my finger.
- I was walking home when it started to rain.
While I _____.
- She broke her leg while she was learning to ski.
She was learning _____.
- He was making lunch when he suddenly felt ill.
As he _____.
- She was telling me about her party when she started to laugh loudly.
She started _____.
- I lost my wallet while I was shopping.
While I _____.
- As the band were playing their first song, all the lights went out.
The band were playing _____.

5 Complete the sentences with your own ideas. Use the past simple or past continuous.

- As I was getting off the bus, _____.
- We were trying to find our hotel when _____.
- An amazing thing happened as _____.

Luckily, James ¹¹_____ (carry) a knife so he ¹²_____ (use) it to fight off the shark. Then he ¹³_____ (get) out of the water and ¹⁴_____ (look) at his leg. The bites were 5 cm long and they ¹⁵_____ (bleed) a lot. James ¹⁶_____ (clean) his leg. Then he and his friends ¹⁷_____ (go) to a nearby café! While they ¹⁸_____ (enjoy) a drink, somebody ¹⁹_____ (give) James a bandage because his leg ²⁰_____ (bleed). He ²¹_____ (go) to hospital for some treatment, but on Monday he was back at work.