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Basics: Past Continuous vs. Past Simple

Medium | A2 | Elementary | Pre-intermediate | Past tense | Simple tense | Progressive tense | English Grammar Basics

1. Choose the right phrase to complete the frustrated college student's text message.

I was trying to study for my final exams when my roommate suddenly _____ playing the tuba in the living room.

Select one.

A) was starting
B) starts
C) started
D) start

2. Reconstruct the clumsy student's excuse to the phone repair technician. Select the correct word for each gap.

While I _____ my bicycle to campus, a furious squirrel _____ right in front of me, and I dropped my phone!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) was riding
B) rode
C) am riding

Blank 2

A) jumped
B) was jumping
C) jumps

3. Review the passive-aggressive sticky notes left by a frustrated roommate. Select ALL the grammatically correct sentences that describe two actions happening at the exact same time in the past.

Select all that apply.

A) While I was scrubbing the floors, you were playing video games.
B) I was scrubbing the floors while you were playing video games.
C) I scrubbed the floors while you are playing video games.
D) While I was scrubbing the floors, you have played video games.

4. Help the suspect provide a rock-solid (and delicious) alibi to the detective.

When the museum alarm went off at exactly 8:00 PM, I _____ a whole pizza at the restaurant across the street!

Select one.

A) ate
B) was eating
C) am eating
D) eat

5. A clumsy chef is explaining a chain of unfortunate events. Select ALL the sentences that correctly use the Past Simple for a sequence of completed actions in the past.

Select all that apply.

A) First, I dropped the eggs, then I slipped on the yolks, and finally, I ruined the cake.
B) I dropped the eggs, slipped on the yolks, and ruined the cake.
C) I was dropping the eggs, then I was slipping on the yolks, and finally, I ruined the cake.
D) I dropped the eggs, was slipping on the yolks, and was ruining the cake.

6. Complete the ghost hunter's spooky audio log.

We were exploring the dusty attic when the heavy wooden door suddenly _____ shut behind us.

Select one.

- **A)** was slamming
- **B)** slammed
- **C)** slams
- **D)** slam

7. Help the nervous suspect provide a solid alibi to the police chief. Select the correct option for each blank.

At exactly 8:00 PM last night, I _____ my favorite reality TV show about baking. I _____ any banks, I promise!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was watching
- **B)** watched
- **C)** have watched

Blank 2

- **A)** didn't rob
- **B)** wasn't robbing
- **C)** don't rob

8. Help the aspiring chef finish his tragic text message to his mom. Choose the best verb form for each gap.

I _____ a beautiful cheese soufflé when the fire alarm suddenly _____ off and ruined my masterpiece!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was making
- **B)** made
- **C)** were making

Blank 2

- **A)** went
- **B)** was going
- **C)** goes

9. Read the ghost hunter's spooky journal entries. Remember that "state verbs" (like *seem* and *know*) behave differently than action verbs! Select ALL the grammatically correct entries.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** The old mansion seemed empty, but I knew we weren't alone.
- **B)** We knew we weren't alone because the old mansion seemed haunted.
- **C)** The old mansion was seeming empty, but I was knowing we weren't alone.
- **D)** We were knowing we weren't alone because the old mansion was seeming haunted.

10. Help the detective identify ALL the statements from the suspect that use correct grammar to describe what was happening when the sudden event occurred. Select all that apply.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** I was eating a slice of pizza when the lights went out.
- **B)** When the lights went out, I was eating a slice of pizza.
- **C)** I ate a slice of pizza when the lights were going out.
- **D)** I was eating a slice of pizza when the lights were going out.

11. Help the clumsy barista explain the morning disaster to the coffee shop manager.

I _____ a beautiful swan in the latte foam when I suddenly sneezed and dropped the cup.

Select one.

- **A)** was drawing
- **B)** drew
- **C)** am drawing
- **D)** draw

12. Complete the teenager's text message explaining why they didn't answer the phone by choosing the correct verb form for each gap.

"Sorry Mom! I _____ on the couch when the phone _____."

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was sleeping
- **B)** slept
- **C)** am sleeping

Blank 2

- **A)** was ringing
- **B)** ringed
- **C)** rang

13. Fill in the blanks to reveal the chef's hilarious kitchen disaster. Choose the correct verb for each gap.

Chef Gordon _____ the onions when he accidentally _____ his favorite mixing spoon into the soup.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was chopping
- **B)** chopped
- **C)** were chopping

Blank 2

- **A)** was dropping
- **B)** drop
- **C)** dropped

14. Complete the detective's dramatic case notes by selecting the correct option for each blank.

The wind _____ and the rain was pouring down when the mysterious stranger finally _____ on my office door.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was howling
- **B)** howled
- **C)** is howling

Blank 2

- **A)** knocked
- **B)** was knocking
- **C)** knock

15. Help the confused witness complete their statement for the police by choosing the correct verb for each blank.

"I _____ a massive sandwich when the alien spaceship _____ right in the middle of my backyard."

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** ate
- **B)** was eating
- **C)** were eating

Blank 2

A) was landing
B) landing
C) landed