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Basics: Past Continuous - Form and Use

Easy | A2 | Elementary | Pre-intermediate | Past tense | Progressive tense | Verb | Questions | Negation | English Grammar Basics

1. You're explaining to your best friend why you missed their urgent call about free pizza at 8 PM last night. Select ALL the valid excuses that correctly form the past continuous tense.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** At 8 PM, I was desperately trying to assemble a bookshelf.
- **B)** I was watching a documentary about cheese when you called.
- **C)** At 8 PM, I was try to assemble a bookshelf.
- **D)** I was watched a documentary about cheese when you called.

2. Help the detective piece together the suspect's alibi by choosing the correct verb for each gap in the police report.

At 8 PM last night, I _____ a fascinating documentary about penguins. At the exact same time, my roommate _____ soundly on the living room couch. Neither of us heard the cookie jar break!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

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

Blank 2

- **A)** is sleeping
- **B)** sleeps
- **C)** was sleeping

3. An alien visitor is confused by what humans were doing during yesterday's rainstorm. Help them form their questions! Select ALL the grammatically correct questions using the past continuous.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** Why were those people running with umbrellas?
- **B)** Was that man singing in the puddles?
- **C)** Why was those people running with umbrellas?
- **D)** Were that man singing in the puddles?

4. Help the clumsy detective complete his incident report.

I _____ the priceless vase when it suddenly slipped from my hands and shattered into a thousand pieces.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

- **A)** was examining
- **B)** were examining
- **C)** am examining

5. Complete the frustrated roommate's text message.

"How could I sleep? While I was trying to study, my upstairs neighbors _____ loudly to 80s disco music!"

Select one.

- **A)** was dancing
- **B)** danced
- **C)** are dancing
- **D)** were dancing

6. Complete the landlord's observation about two very unhelpful roommates.

While Greg _____ video games, his roommate _____ on the sofa, and the kitchen sink overflowed!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was playing
- **B)** were playing
- **C)** is playing

Blank 2

- **A)** was sleeping
- **B)** were sleeping
- **C)** is sleeping

7. Review the suspect's alibi for the detective's report. Select ALL the statements that correctly use the past continuous to describe an action that was interrupted when the power went out.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** I was taking a shower when the lights suddenly went out.
- **B)** When the power failed, my cat was sleeping on my face.
- **C)** I were taking a shower when the lights went out.
- **D)** When the power failed, my cat sleeping on my face.

8. The fire alarm rang during the school play rehearsal. Help the drama teacher write what everyone was doing at that moment by choosing the correct verb for each gap.

At 7 PM yesterday, when the fire alarm rang, the twins _____ the scenery blue. Our director _____ at the actors, and you _____ from the director behind the curtain with a sandwich!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was painting
- **B)** were painting
- **C)** are painting

Blank 2

- **A)** was shouting
- **B)** were shouting
- **C)** is shouting

Blank 3

- **A)** are hiding
- **B)** was hiding
- **C)** were hiding

9. Complete the frustrated student's text message by choosing the correct verb to explain why they missed a phone call.

Sorry I missed your call! While I _____ for my history exam, my younger brother _____ his drums loudly in the next room. I couldn't hear my phone at all!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was studying
- **B)** studied
- **C)** am studying

Blank 2

- **A)** was playing
- **B)** played
- **C)** is playing

10. Complete a tired student's very unconvincing excuse to the professor.

I promise I _____ during your lecture! I _____ my eyes for forty-five minutes.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** wasn't sleeping
- **B)** weren't sleeping
- **C)** didn't sleeping

Blank 2

- **A)** was just resting
- **B)** were just resting
- **C)** just resting

11. Help the confused witness provide an alibi for the night of the alien invasion.

At exactly midnight last Tuesday, I _____ a giant pepperoni pizza in my kitchen, so I didn't see the spaceship land in the yard.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

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

12. Help the traumatized babysitter describe the chaotic evening to the parents. Select ALL the sentences that correctly use the past continuous to describe actions happening at the same time.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** While Timmy was painting the dog, Sarah was eating crayons.
- **B)** I was hiding in the closet while the twins were throwing spaghetti.
- **C)** I was hid in the closet while the twins throwed spaghetti.
- **D)** While Timmy painting the dog, Sarah was eat crayons.

13. Choose the right words to set the scene for the beginning of this ghost story.

"It was a dark and stormy night. The wind was howling, and the heavy rain _____ against the dusty windows of the old mansion."

Select one.

- **A)** is beating
- **B)** beats
- **C)** was beating
- **D)** were beating

14. Complete the curious friend's text message about a funny sighting.

"I saw you at the park yesterday with a giant butterfly net. What on earth _____ when I drove by?"

Select one.

- **A)** are you doing
- **B)** were you doing
- **C)** you were doing
- **D)** was you doing

15. Complete the story about the great cafeteria disaster of 2023 by choosing the correct verb for each blank.

Mr. Henderson _____ across the room when he suddenly slipped on a rogue mashed potato. He _____ a giant stack of our math tests at the time, and they flew everywhere!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was walking
- **B)** were walking
- **C)** walks

Blank 2

- **A)** was carrying
- **B)** is carrying
- **C)** carried