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Basics. Past Simple vs. Past Continuous Contrast

Medium | B1 | Intermediate | Conjunction | Irregular verb | Past tense | Verb | Verb tense | Progressive tense | Simple tense

1. A student is trying to explain to his professor why he arrived to class completely soaked. Select ALL the excuses that use the past tenses correctly.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** I was riding my bike to school when it started to rain.
- **B)** It started to rain while I was riding my bike to school.
- **C)** I rode my bike to school when it was starting to rain.
- **D)** While it started to rain, I rode my bike to school.

2. Fill in the detective's notes about the highly suspicious suspect.

While the suspect _____ blankly at the interrogation room wall, I suddenly _____ he was wearing a fake mustache.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was staring
- **B)** stared
- **C)** had stared

Blank 2

- **A)** realized
- **B)** was realizing
- **C)** had realized

3. Complete a student's highly dramatic email explaining to their professor why they missed the morning lecture.

I am so sorry I missed class! I _____ my bicycle to campus when a brave squirrel suddenly _____ into my basket. It _____ my essay and immediately ran up a tree!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was riding
- **B)** were riding
- **C)** rode

Blank 2

- **A)** jumped
- **B)** was jumping
- **C)** jumps

Blank 3

- **A)** grabbed
- **B)** was grabbing
- **C)** grab

4. Help the restaurant manager complete the incident report about the ruined wedding cake.

The head chef _____ the magnificent five-tier wedding cake when he suddenly _____ on a stray meatball.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

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

Blank 2

- **A)** slipped
- **B)** was slipping
- **C)** had slipped

5. Help Detective Barnaby finalize his incident report about a very clumsy suspect.

The suspect _____ on a banana peel, _____ into a fruit stand, and finally realized that a police officer _____ him the entire time.

Select one.

- **A)** was slipping / was crashing / watched
- **B)** slipped / crashed / watched
- **C)** slipped / crashed / was watching
- **D)** was slipping / crashed / was watching

6. Help Agent 006 complete his highly confidential (and slightly embarrassing) mission report by selecting the correct verbs.

While I _____ past the laser beams, my phone suddenly _____ loudly. The guards _____ cards at the time, but they immediately dropped their snacks and ran toward me.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** was sneaking
- **B)** was sneak
- **C)** were sneaking

Blank 2

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

Blank 3

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

7. Help the detective select ALL the grammatically correct sentences for her official report about last night's stakeout.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** While I was sitting in my car, the streetlights suddenly went out.
- **B)** I was sitting in my car when the streetlights suddenly went out.
- **C)** I sat in my car when the streetlights were suddenly going out.
- **D)** While I sat in my car, the streetlights suddenly go out.

8. Choose the best verbs to finish this slightly spooky (and hungry) campfire story.

We _____ marshmallows when we suddenly _____ a loud branch snap in the woods. While my brother _____ the noise, a sneaky raccoon ran out of the bushes and stole our hot dogs!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** were roasting
- **B)** was roasting
- **C)** roasted

Blank 2

- **A)** heard
- **B)** were hearing
- **C)** hear

Blank 3

- **A)** was investigating
- **B)** investigated
- **C)** were investigating

9. Read the backpacker's blog post. Select ALL the sentences that correctly describe two ongoing actions happening at the exact same time in the hostel kitchen.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** I was cooking dinner while my new friends were playing cards.
- **B)** While I was cooking dinner, my new friends were playing cards.
- **C)** I was cooking dinner while my new friends play cards.
- **D)** I cooked dinner when my new friends were playing cards.

10. Complete the frustrated landlord's observation of the messy roommates.

When I looked through the window at 8 PM, Marcus _____ video games at maximum volume while Dave _____ pizza on the supposedly clean sofa.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

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

Blank 2

- **A)** ate
- **B)** was eating
- **C)** had eaten

11. Help the aspiring chef explain his kitchen disaster by choosing the correct verb forms.

I _____ onions when the fire alarm suddenly _____ off, making me drop the entire bowl on the floor!

Select one.

- **A)** was chopping / went
- **B)** chopped / was going
- **C)** was chopping / was going
- **D)** chopped / went