

Unit 23: PAST CONTINUOUS

This formation usually means ‘past — for a limited period of time’. We use the past tense of the auxiliary verb **be** (Unit 17) before the **-ing** form of the lexical verb (Unit 3).

1 Formation (**be + -ing form**)

a STATEMENTS

EXAMPLES: I **was working** all yesterday morning.
He **wasn't doing** anything.
The climate **was changing** at this time.
They **were** not enjoying themselves.

b QUESTIONS

EXAMPLES: What **were** you **doing** at 9:45 last night?
Where **was** he **going**?
Who **was** helping him?

NOTICE: For spelling problems with the **-ing** form of the verb, look at Appendix 6.

2 Use

a PAST ACTIVITY OR TEMPORARY HABIT

EXAMPLES: Between 10 and 11 last night, I **was reading**.
They **were getting** up early that month.

b BACKGROUND ACTIVITY IN THE PAST

EXAMPLES: She **was welding** a pipe when the phone rang.
By the time they reached the pipeline, the surveyors **were** already **finishing** their last shots.

c ARRANGEMENTS IN THE PAST

EXAMPLES: Everybody was excited because they **were leaving** for home the next day.

NOTICE: Past continuous or past simple? (Unit 40)
Past continuous or **used to**? (Unit 40)