Past Simple and Past Continuous

16 Complete the sentences with the Past Simple or Past Continuous.

We use the …

Past Continuous to describe longer activities 
interrupted by shorter ones in the past.

a ______________ to describe temporary situations in 
the past.

b ______________ to describe single events in the past.

c ______________ to describe things which were in 
progress at or around a fixed time in the past.

d ______________ to describe past states.

e ______________ to tell stories.

f ______________ to set the scene in a story or give 
background information.

g ______________ to describe regular events in the past.

17 Now match the sentences to the functions in Exercise 16, including the examples.

Katie loved this bear when she was a baby.

1 I was studying Spanish in Barcelona 
for the summer.

2 The bus came down this road every day 
for twenty years.

3 A the party the people were already 
chatting merrily and the music 
was playing softly in the background.

4 Bernie walked home in the rain, 
she didn't have an umbrella that day 
and she didn't have enough change for the bus.

5 The chair broke when Davy stood on it.

6 While I was downloading the latest tracks my 
computer shut down.

7 At ten o'clock I was still sleeping.

18 Transform the sentences from the Present Simple into 
the Past Simple.

All the students have lunch at school.

All the students had lunch at school.

1 We don’t drink wine with our meal.

2 Does the shop sell bread?

3 Nobody buys our products online.

4 Where do you meet your friends?

5 The company doesn’t respond to all complaints.

6 I forget the name of the coffee shop I like.

7 Do most customers leave positive feedback?

19 Use the verbs in the box in the Past Continuous tense 
to complete the text about Peter’s evening.

text sit move finish wait

Peter’s appointment

It was a Wednesday evening and as I remember 
it had been raining outside. It was about 4 o’clock in 
the afternoon and most people were finishing work and heading home to enjoy a nice peaceful 
evening at home. Most people. Not me. I was sitting in the doctor’s waiting room. I was feeling nervous. 
I had been nervously waiting for my appointment 
to get my test results. It was strange that I was the only person there when the door opened and a man came in. He was carrying a large box. He sat next to me and placed the box on his knees. He didn’t want to chat so I started texting my wife. While I was texting my wife 
I heard a ‘miaow’ and noticed that the box was moving. It made me jump. The man then apologised and explained that the cat was for the doctor. ‘Is the cat ill?’ I asked the man. ‘No, the cat is really well, it’s the best rat catcher in the county, the doctor won’t be disappointed’.

20 Write the questions to the answers about the text in 
Exercise 19.

What was the weather like?

It was raining.

1 They were finishing work for the day and heading home.

2 He was sitting in the doctor’s waiting room.

3 He was feeling nervous.

4 The man was carrying a box.

5 He was texting his wife when he heard the cat.
21 Match the two halves of the sentences.

1. Was Jess feeling angry
   a. the people were all sleeping.
2. The children were playing in the garden
   b. when the music started.
3. The shop assistant was chatting on the phone
   c. we were waiting for him.
4. When the earthquake struck
   d. when it started to snow.
5. The crowd were cheering and dancing
   e. when she threw the plate?
6. When dad came home
   f. when the music started.

22 Put the verbs in brackets in the correct tense.

1. A You will never guess who I saw (see) when I 1 ______ (shop) in town?
   B Who?
   A Meryl Streep!
   B Really? What 2 ______ (see/do)?
   A Well she 3 ______ (talk) on her mobile phone and she 4 ______ (look) at clothes.
   B Was she alone?
   A No, she wasn’t. She 5 ______ (have) 3 body guards with her. They 6 ______ (watch) her every move.
   B Gosh, 7 ______ anyone else ______ (notice) her?
   A Oh yes, loads of people, but we 8 ______ (try) to be cool - as if we see famous actresses all the time! I 9 ______ (take) a photo on my mobile phone, but it isn’t very clear, look.

2. A OK, Luke, can you tell me the answer to question 6?
   B No, Miss.
   A Do you know why you can’t answer? Because you 1 ______ (not listen) when I 2 ______ (explain) this exercise.
   B I 3 ______ (listen) Miss, it’s just that John 4 ______ (talk) to me at the same time!

3. A When the alarm 1 ______ (ring) this morning I 2 ______ (have) a really strange dream.
   B Oh yes, what about?
   A I 3 ______ (dream) about a girl I 4 ______ (go) to college with five years ago.
   B Oh, right. That doesn’t sound so strange.
   A No, but wait. Then when I 5 ______ (read) the paper at breakfast time, I 6 ______ (see) her photo.
   B No way!
   A Yes, she has just won a major sporting competition, isn’t that strange?

23 Use the pairs of verbs in the correct tense to complete the sentences.

feed-attack
queue-begin
arrive-stand
not-rain-set off
carry-trip
buy-take
ring-explain
talk-call

1. We ______ for tickets when the match ______.
2. The waiter ______ a tray of drinks when he ______ and fell.
3. When the bell ______ the teacher ______ the homework task.
4. The zookeeper ______ the tiger when it ______ him.
5. I ______ about you to Henry when you ______!
6. When the police ______ Justin ______ outside the shop, handing out leaflets.
7. It ______ when we ______ this morning, but now look!
8. I think you ______ the drinks when Alice ______ this photo.

24 Use the prompts to write sentences using the Past Continuous and/or the Past Simple.

1. Who / you / talk to / when / I / arrive?
   Who / you / talk to / when / I / arrive?
   Who / you / talk to / when / I / arrive?
   Who / you / talk to / when / I / arrive?

2. What / I / say / before / you / interrupt / me?
   What / I / say / before / you / interrupt / me?
   What / I / say / before / you / interrupt / me?
   What / I / say / before / you / interrupt / me?

3. When / she / win / the race / everyone / cheering.
   When / she / win / the race / everyone / cheering.
   When / she / win / the race / everyone / cheering.
   When / she / win / the race / everyone / cheering.

4. You / argue / when / I / come in?
   You / argue / when / I / come in?
   You / argue / when / I / come in?
   You / argue / when / I / come in?

5. They always / visit their Grandmother / when they / be / children.
6. I / cook / dinner / at the same time as / you / do / your homework.
7. The students / talk / and laugh / but when / teacher / arrive / they / stop.
8. I / not / expect a present / so / this / is / a surprise.
9. The band / play / wonderful music and the people / chat / happily.
10. First he cook dinner / then he tidy the house.

25 Complete the letter with one word in each gap.

I am writing to complain about your company’s customer service.
On Valentine’s day I ______ your restaurant to make a reservation for myself and my girlfriend.
I ______ to a young man and he assured me that there were tables available, so I ______ a table for 7 o’clock.
We ______ at the restaurant at exactly 7 o’clock, but our table ______ ready, so we ordered some drinks and sat at the bar. While we ______ waiting at least 8 other couples ______ into the restaurant and were shown to a table.
I ______ to feel a little annoyed about this, but when I ______ to the waiter he just smiled and ______ away!
We ______ for one hour before our table ______ ready. After five minutes the waiter came to take our order, but most of the food on the menu ______ available because we ______ too late! I ______ to speak to the manager but he ______ there! On the busiest night of the year!
In the end we ______ a very dull plate of pasta each and ______ home extremely disappointed. I think that in the future you should take fewer bookings and treat your customers better. We will not visit your restaurant again.
Yours sincerely.
Mark Jones