**Lesson on the Past Continuous Tense**

**1. What is the Past Continuous Tense?**

The **Past Continuous tense** describes actions or events that were ongoing at a specific time in the past. It is often used to show that an action was in progress when another event occurred or to provide background details in a story.

**2. Forms of the Past Continuous Tense**

The Past Continuous has three forms: **affirmative**, **negative**, and **interrogative**.

**A. Affirmative Form**

**Structure**:  
**Subject + was/were + Verb (-ing)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Subject | Verb: "play" | Example Sentence |
| I/He/She/It | was playing | I was playing football at 6 p.m. |
| You/We/They | were playing | They were playing in the park yesterday. |

**Key Notes**:

* Use **was** with **I, he, she, it**.
* Use **were** with **you, we, they**.
* The verb always takes the **-ing** form

**B. Negative Form**

**Structure**:  
**Subject + was/were not + Verb (-ing)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Subject | Negative Verb | Example Sentence |
| I/He/She/It | was not (wasn’t) playing | He wasn’t playing video games last night. |
| You/We/They | were not (weren’t) playing | We weren’t studying at 9 a.m. |

**C. Interrogative Form**

**Structure**:  
**Was/Were + Subject + Verb (-ing)?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Question Format | Example Sentence |
| Was + I/he/she/it + verb (-ing)? | Was she reading a book at that time? |
| Were + you/we/they + verb (-ing)? | Were they running when it started raining? |

**3. Uses of the Past Continuous Tense**

The Past Continuous is used in the following contexts:

**A. Actions in Progress at a Specific Time in the Past**

To describe actions that were ongoing at a particular moment in the past.

**Examples**:

* At 8 p.m. yesterday, I was watching a movie.
* She was working on her project all afternoon.

**B. Interrupted Actions**

To describe an action in progress when another action (in the **Past Simple**) interrupted it.

**Examples**:

* I was sleeping when the phone rang.
* They were having dinner when the electricity went out.

**C. Two Actions Happening at the Same Time (Parallel Actions)**

To describe two or more actions that were happening simultaneously in the past.

**Examples**:

* I was cooking while she was setting the table.
* They were studying, and we were playing games.

**D. Background Details in a Story**

To set the scene in the past or describe the atmosphere.

**Examples**:

* The sun was shining, and the birds were singing.
* The children were laughing and playing in the park.

**4. Examples in Sentences**

1. **Affirmative**:
   * I was reading a book when you called.
   * They were dancing at the party all night.
2. **Negative**:
   * He wasn’t working when I arrived.
   * We weren’t watching TV at that time.
3. **Interrogative**:
   * Was she studying at 10 p.m.?
   * Were they playing football when it started to rain?

**5. Common Time Expressions Used with the Past Continuous**

* At (specific time): *at 5 p.m., at midnight*
* While: *while cooking, while it was raining*
* When (to indicate interruption): *when he arrived, when the alarm rang*

**6. Common Mistakes to Avoid**

1. **Confusing the Past Continuous and Past Simple**:
   * *Incorrect*: I watched TV at 8 p.m. (if it was ongoing).
   * *Correct*: I was watching TV at 8 p.m.
2. **Forgetting "was/were"**:
   * *Incorrect*: She playing in the garden.
   * *Correct*: She was playing in the garden.
3. **Using "was/were" with non-continuous verbs**:  
   Some verbs (stative verbs) are not typically used in continuous tenses because they describe states, not actions. Examples include:
   * **Mental states**: know, believe, think (opinion)
   * **Emotions**: love, hate, like
   * **Senses**: hear, see, smell  
     *Incorrect*: I was knowing the answer.  
     *Correct*: I knew the answer.