2

GRAMMAR

Past time

Past simple

- To describe finished events in the past with a definite time, or a past time context:
  *In 1684 Newton **published** his theory of gravity.*
  *During a storm, the bridge **collapsed**.*

- To describe past conditions, routines and habits:
  *Women and children **worked** in the mines hauling coal along narrow tunnels.*
  *My father **took** the 8.15 train every morning for thirty years.*
  *Whenever they **went** shopping together, they always **had** coffee at the same café.*

  Many common verbs have irregular past forms:
  *A hundred candidates **took** the test.*
  *What events **led** to the American Revolution?*

Past tense forms without past time meaning

- Past tense forms also appear in conditional sentences, but do not refer to past time:
  *If I **knew** the answer, I would tell you.*

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Past continuous

- In a narrative context with events in past simple, past continuous describes continuing unfinished actions:
  *The ship **was sinking**, and there weren't enough lifeboats for all the passengers.*

- Continuing unfinished actions describe the background to a sudden event:
  *While they **were getting** into the lifeboats, the ship suddenly went down.*

- Past continuous verbs can describe a number of activities used as background:
  *We looked out across the sea. Passengers **were floating** in the water and sailors **were trying** to pull them into the lifeboats.*

- It is possible to describe two continuing events happening at the same time:
  *While the passengers **were beginning** to lose hope, rescue ships **were approaching**.*

- Describing a changing situation:
  *The weather **was getting** worse by the hour.*

Participle clauses

- Clauses with past continuous are often made into participle time clauses:
  ***While (they were) waiting**, the passengers filled in the forms.*

➜ **SEE ALSO**
Grammar 29: Participle clauses
Grammar 10: Subject and object questions

1 Underline the most suitable verb form in each sentence.

The 'Miracle on the Hudson'

1 First Officer Jeffery Skiles *piloted/was piloting* the Airbus A320 when it *took off/was taking off* from La Guardia airport at 3.25 pm on Jan 15th 2009.
2 While it *still climbed/was still climbing*, and below 1,000 metres, he *noticed/was noticing* a flight of birds which *came/was coming* towards the aircraft.
3 A few minutes later the plane *collided/was colliding* with the birds and the engines *lost/were losing* power.
4 The Captain, Chesley Sullenberger, *took over/was taking over* the controls at this point, and Skiles *tried/was trying* to restart the engines.
5 Sullenberger *got/was getting* permission from La Guardia control tower to land back at the airport, but since the plane *rapidly lost/was rapidly losing* height, it soon *became/was becoming* clear that this would not be possible.
6 With no power in the engines, Sullenberger *made/was making* an instant decision, and *decided/was deciding* to land the plane on the Hudson River, the only free space available.
7 As office workers *watched/were watching* in amazement, he *managed/was managing* to make a perfect landing on the water close to Manhattan just six minutes after take-off.
8 The passengers *followed/were following* the safety instructions given by the crew, and with their assistance all *left/were leaving* the aircraft, including one passenger who *travelled/was travelling* in a wheelchair.
9 Nearby boats *quickly rescued/were quickly rescuing* the passengers from the freezing water and from the wings of the plane which *slowly filled/was slowly filling* with water.
10 All the passengers and crew *survived/were surviving* without serious injury, and the crew later *received/were receiving* awards for their conduct.

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2 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence.

1 What were you in my room for?
What were you doing ..... in my room?
2 The start of the match was at 3.00.
The match ..... at 3.00.
3 The temperature was rising.
It ..... hotter.
4 After the explosion, what was your next action?
What ..... the explosion?
5 We had lunch during our wait.
While ..... lunch.
6 On her death, the newspapers described her as the country's greatest writer.
When ..... the country's greatest writer.
7 The police do not know the exact cause of the crash.
The police do not know what exactly ..... .
8 What was your address at the time of the robbery?
Where ..... at the time of the robbery?

3 Complete each sentence by writing the past simple or past continuous form of the verb in brackets in each space.

1 When I (hear) ....heard..... the noise I (look) ..... out of the window, but I couldn't see what (happen) ..... .
2 We (wait) ..... in a queue for nearly an hour, but after that we (decide) ..... to complain because it (take) ..... so long to get the tickets.
3 The accused (drive) ..... home after a party when he (lose) ..... control of his car on a roundabout and (collide) ..... with another vehicle.
4 The injured man (not carry) ..... any form of identification, and nobody could understand exactly what he (say) ..... .
5 I (find) ..... myself in a rather difficult situation. It (start)..... to rain, and the temperature (fall) ..... rapidly, I (wear) ..... only light summer clothes and it was a long way back to the road.
6 An archaeological rescue dig (cause) ..... further delays to the projects, as engineers (come) ..... unexpectedly upon the remains of a 3rd century palace while work on the site (get) ..... under way.

4 Complete the text by writing the past simple or past continuous form of the verbs in brackets in each space.

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Cholera epidemics in 19th century London

People in London in the mid-nineteenth century greatly (1) ....feared..... (fear) cholera. At this time doctors (2) ..... (believe) that cholera (3) ..... (circulate) through the air, and (4) ..... (not realize) that all the time raw sewage (5) ..... (enter) the water supply, and that the disease (6) ..... (spread) through the domestic water system. Although in the 17th and 18th centuries London (7) ..... (possess) a water supply system and a sewage system which were adequate for a small city, the population (8) ..... (now rise) year by year and the authorities (9) ..... (do) little to keep pace with the changing situation. Broken water pipes and sewage pipes often (10) ..... (flow) into one another, and most sewage (11) ..... (end up) in the River Thames, which was the main source of drinking water for thousands. Between 1831 and 1867 a series of severe outbreaks (12) ..... (occur) In the outbreak of 1848–49, there were over 30,000 cases of the disease in London, and 15,000 people (13) ..... (die) By the mid 1860s the situation (14) ..... (improve) mainly because by then engineers (15) ..... , (work on) the construction of a completely new sewage system, which they (16) ..... (complete) in 1875, and which is still in use today.

5 Complete the text by writing a verb from the box in each space.

~~opened~~	died	came	occurred	was getting down	intended
was holding	included	carried	was walking	stopped	
knocked	was attending	decided	entered	was travelling	

The death of William Huskisson

When the Liverpool to Manchester Railway (1) ...opened..... in 1830 the history of transport (2) ..... a new phase. As if to underline this fact, the opening ceremony (3) ..... what we would now call a celebrity railway accident. While he (4) ..... the opening celebrations, William Huskisson, an MP and former member of the government, (5) ..... along the line on the same train as the Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington. At one point the train (6) ..... and the distinguished passengers (7) ..... to get off and watch a procession of local people. Apparently Huskisson (8) ..... to cross the track so as to shake hands with the Duke, but as he (9) ..... from the train, a steam engine (10) ..... down the other line next to the train. It hit the door that Huskisson (11) ..... and (12) ..... him under the wheels. Workmen (13) ..... him to a nearby house, but he (14) ..... a few hours later. Huskisson was not the first casualty of the railway age. This probably (15) ..... in 1821 when a train hit a man who (16) ..... home along the Middleton Railway in a storm. However the dawn of the Age of Railway Accidents will always be associated with the unfortunate Huskisson.

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6 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using a noun formed from the verb underlined.

1 After the Prime Minister arrived, the conference began.
After the arrival of the Prime Minister , the conference began .
2 After she decided to become a pilot, Amelia took flying lessons.
After her ..... , Amelia took flying lessons.
3 After he invented the gramophone, Edison became famous.
After his ..... , Edison became famous.
4 Before they discovered America, explorers believed Asia was on the other side of the Atlantic.
Before their ..... , explorers believed Asia was on the other side of the Atlantic.
5 While they were flying, the pilot realized something was wrong.
During the ..... , the pilot realized something was wrong.
6 After he died, Van Gogh was recognized as a great artist.
After his ..... , Van Gogh was recognized as a great artist.
7 While they were constructing the dam, there were several accidents.
During the ..... , there were several accidents.
8 While they were investigating the robbery, the police interviewed two men.
During the ..... , the police interviewed two men.