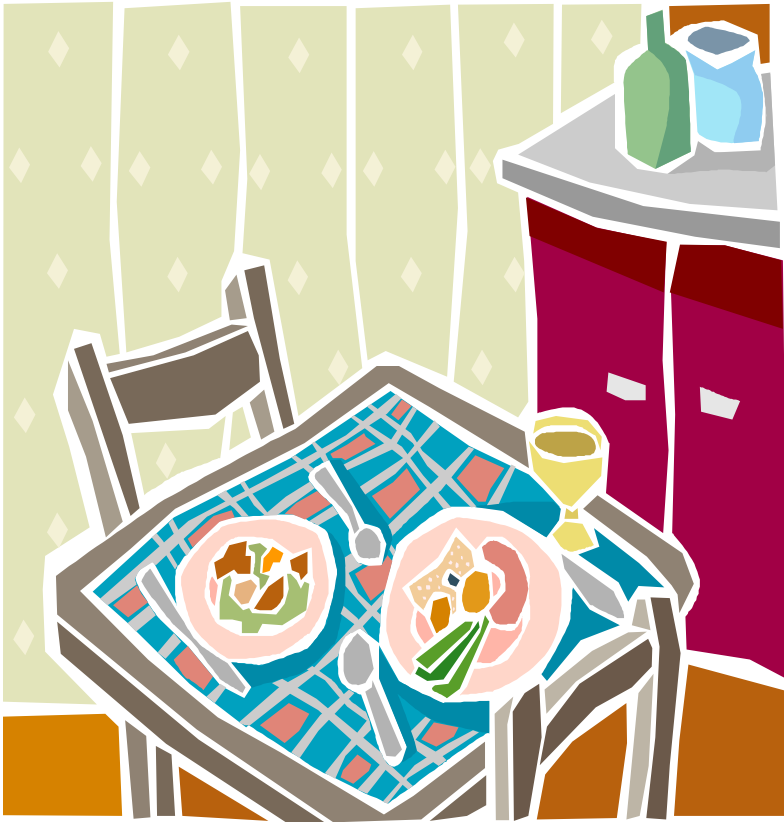


The Past Progressive

(also called the Past Continuous)



At 6:00 o'clock, my wife and I *were eating*.

- The past progressive tense describes an action that was **in progress at a specific time in the past**.

(They began eating before 6:00 o'clock, but we do not know the exact ending time.)

Simple past with the *past progressive*

We *were eating* when the phone *rang*.

- Use the past progressive with the simple past to talk about an action that is interrupted by another action. Use the simple past for the interrupting action.



Using *while*

- Use *while* with the present progressive to talk about **two actions in progress at the same time in the past.**

- *While I was watching TV, my wife was talking on the phone.*
- My wife *was talking on the phone while I was watching TV.*

While or when?

- *While* is usually used with the past progressive.

While I was taking a shower, my wife answered the phone.

- *When* is usually used with the simple past.

I was taking a shower *when* my wife answered the phone.

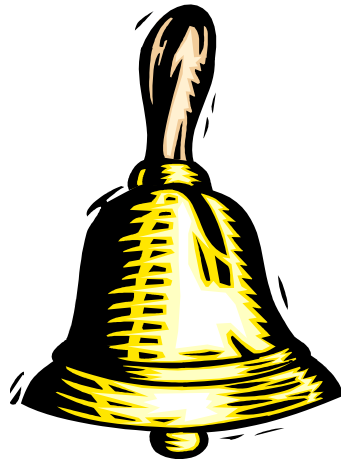
What's the difference in meaning?

- When the bell rang, I was eating dinner.

(First I was eating dinner, then the bell rang.)

- When the bell rang, I ate dinner.

(First the bell rang, then I ate dinner.)





- Past progressive focuses on the **duration** of an action, not its completion.

Paul **was reading** a book last night.

(We don't know if he finished the book.)

- Simple past focuses on the **completion** of an action.

Paul **read** a book last night.

(He probably finished it.)