



## Narrative Tenses: Setting the Scene: Past Simple & Past Continuous

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

1. It \_\_\_ a beautiful morning. The birds were singing in the trees.  
a) was  
b) were  
c) was being  
d) had been
2. While I \_\_\_ dinner, the phone rang.  
a) cooked  
b) was cooking  
c) had cooked  
d) cook
3. She \_\_\_ along the street when she saw an old friend.  
a) walked  
b) walks  
c) was walking  
d) had walked
4. When the teacher \_\_\_, all the students stopped talking.  
a) was entering  
b) enters  
c) had entered  
d) entered
5. The sun \_\_\_ and a gentle breeze was blowing through the trees.  
a) was shining  
b) shone  
c) shines  
d) had shone
6. I \_\_\_ TV when I heard a strange noise outside.  
a) watched  
b) was watching  
c) watch  
d) had watched
7. While they \_\_\_ in the garden, it suddenly started to rain.  
a) played  
b) play  
c) were playing  
d) had played
8. The moment I \_\_\_ the door, I knew something was wrong.  
a) was opening  
b) open  
c) had opened  
d) opened
9. At 8 o'clock last night, we \_\_\_ dinner at a restaurant.  
a) were having  
b) had  
c) have  
d) had had
10. The children \_\_\_ happily while their parents prepared lunch.  
a) played  
b) were playing  
c) play  
d) had played
11. When we \_\_\_ at the station, the train had already left.  
a) were arriving  
b) arrive  
c) arrived  
d) had arrived

12. He \_\_\_ his coffee when he noticed the headline in the newspaper.  
a) drank  
b) drinks  
c) had drunk  
d) was drinking
13. Just as I \_\_\_ asleep, the alarm went off.  
a) was falling  
b) fell  
c) fall  
d) had fallen
14. All night long, the wind \_\_\_ and the rain was pouring down.  
a) howled  
b) was howling  
c) howls  
d) had howled
15. She \_\_\_ to music, so she didn't hear the doorbell.  
a) listened  
b) listens  
c) was listening  
d) had listened
16. When the fire alarm \_\_\_, everyone evacuated the building immediately.  
a) was ringing  
b) rings  
c) had rung  
d) rang
17. I \_\_\_ along the beach when I found a message in a bottle.  
a) was walking  
b) walked  
c) walk  
d) had walked
18. The band \_\_\_ on stage while the audience cheered loudly.  
a) performed  
b) was performing  
c) performs  
d) had performed
19. As soon as the match \_\_\_, the crowd erupted in celebration.  
a) was ending  
b) ends  
c) ended  
d) had ended
20. While everyone \_\_\_, someone stole her purse from the table.  
a) danced  
b) dance  
c) had danced  
d) was dancing



## Answers

1. a) was
2. b) was cooking
3. c) was walking
4. d) entered
5. a) was shining
6. b) was watching
7. c) were playing
8. d) opened
9. a) were having
10. b) were playing
11. c) arrived
12. d) was drinking
13. a) was falling
14. b) was howling
15. c) was listening
16. d) rang
17. a) was walking
18. b) was performing
19. c) ended
20. d) was dancing



## Explanations

### 1. “was” (a)

Use Past Simple 'was' to state a fact about the scene. Past Continuous 'were singing' describes the ongoing background action.

### 2. “was cooking” (b)

'While' + Past Continuous describes the background action. 'Rang' (Past Simple) is the interrupting event.

### 3. “was walking” (c)

Past Continuous 'was walking' sets the scene; Past Simple 'saw' is the sudden event that happened.

### 4. “entered” (d)

'When' + Past Simple indicates the specific moment that triggered another action.

### 5. “was shining” (a)

Both actions describe the background scene, so both use Past Continuous to create atmosphere.

### 6. “was watching” (b)

Past Continuous 'was watching' describes what was happening when the noise (Past Simple 'heard') occurred.

### 7. “were playing” (c)

'While' + Past Continuous for the ongoing activity; 'started' (Past Simple) for the sudden change.

### 8. “opened” (d)

'The moment' + Past Simple indicates the exact point when something happened.

### 9. “were having” (a)

A specific time in the past + Past Continuous describes what was in progress at that moment.

### 10. “were playing” (b)

Past Continuous describes the children's ongoing activity happening at the same time as the parents preparing lunch.

### 11. “arrived” (c)

'When' + Past Simple marks the point of arrival; Past Perfect shows the train left before that.

### 12. “was drinking” (d)

Past Continuous describes the ongoing action; 'noticed' (Past Simple) is the moment of discovery.

### 13. “was falling” (a)

'Just as' + Past Continuous shows the action was in progress when it was interrupted.

### 14. “was howling” (b)

Both Past Continuous verbs describe the continuous atmospheric conditions throughout the night.

### 15. “was listening” (c)

Past Continuous explains the ongoing situation that caused her not to hear the doorbell.

### 16. “rang” (d)

'When' + Past Simple indicates the triggering event that caused the evacuation.

### 17. “was walking” (a)

Past Continuous sets the scene; Past Simple 'found' is the main event of the story.

**18. “was performing” (b)**

Two simultaneous actions in progress - both described with Past Continuous.

**19. “ended” (c)**

'As soon as' + Past Simple shows the immediate trigger for the celebration.

**20. “was dancing” (d)**

'While' + Past Continuous describes what was happening when the theft (Past Simple) occurred.