



GRAMMAR PRACTICE

# Past Simple and Continuous in Achievement Stories

People and Achievement | Narrating events | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0511

## 1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner. You may already use this grammar without noticing it.

No.	Question
1	Describe a challenge someone overcame.
2	What were they doing when the problem started?
3	Name a famous person who achieved something difficult.
4	What happened while they were working towards their goal?

## 2. Grammar in context

Read the text. The bold phrases show the grammar used in a natural topic context.

### A Young Athlete's Challenge

Maya **was training** for a school competition when she **injured** her ankle. At first, she felt disappointed because she had practised for months.

While her friends **were preparing** for the final race, Maya **worked** with a coach to build strength slowly. She did not give up.

On the day of the competition, she **felt** nervous, but she **was smiling** when the race started. She finished second and proved that patience matters.

## 3. Notice the pattern

Use the past continuous for background actions in progress. Use the past simple for completed actions or main events.

Use	Form / signal	Example
Past continuous	was/were + -ing	Maya <b>was training</b> for a competition.
Past simple	completed event	She <b>injured</b> her ankle.
Interrupted action	was/were + -ing when + past simple	She <b>was training</b> when she <b>injured</b> her ankle.
Two background actions	while + past continuous	While friends <b>were preparing</b> , she <b>was recovering</b> .

## 4. Build accurate sentences

Complete each sentence using the grammar focus. Then write two examples of your own.

No.	Prompt	Use	Your answer
1	Maya / train / when she / injure / her ankle.	was -ing / past simple	
2	Her friends / prepare / while she / work / with a coach.	were -ing / past simple	
3	She / feel / nervous when the race / start.	past simple	
4	She / smile / when the race / begin.	was -ing / past simple	

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Use it in exam answers

Complete the tasks using the grammar focus naturally.

Task	What to do
Speaking	Tell a short achievement story using past simple and past continuous.
Writing	Write a paragraph about someone who overcame a challenge.
Reading	Underline past simple and past continuous forms in the context text.

## 6. Common mistakes

Correct the mistakes.

No.	Mistake	Your correction
1	Maya trained when she was injuring her ankle.	
2	While friends prepared, Maya was worked with a coach.	
3	She was felt nervous when the race started.	
4	She smiling when the race began.	

## 7. Topic discussion questions

Use these for pair work, small-group discussion, or speaking-test warm-up practice.

1. What qualities help people overcome challenges?
2. Have you ever achieved something after a difficult start?
3. Why do some people give up while others continue?
4. Which famous achievement story inspires you?

# Past Simple and Continuous in Achievement Stories

## 4. Build accurate sentences

1. Maya was training when she injured her ankle.
2. Her friends were preparing while she worked with a coach.
3. She felt nervous when the race started.
4. She was smiling when the race began.

Own answers will vary. Check that the grammar focus is accurate and natural.

## 6. Common mistakes

1. Maya was training when she injured her ankle.
2. While friends were preparing, Maya worked with a coach.
3. She felt nervous when the race started.
4. She was smiling when the race began.

## Notes for checking

1. Past continuous: was/were + -ing - Maya was training for a competition.
2. Past simple: completed event - She injured her ankle.
3. Interrupted action: was/were + -ing when + past simple - She was training when she injured her ankle.
4. Two background actions: while + past continuous - While friends were preparing, she was recovering.