

Lesson 13. Mastering the verbs 8

Past continuous

We use the past continuous when we want to refer to actions that happened in the past and continued for a period of time.

For example:

- They **were looking** at the painting for a long time. *Ellos estuvieron mirando el cuadro por largo tiempo.*
- What **were you thinking**? *¿En qué estabas pensando?*
- I **was having breakfast** when he arrived. *Yo desayunaba cuando él llegó.*

Let's review its structure.

Structure:

- **Affirmative:** Subject + was/were + main verb ending in -ing + object
Example: I was studying at the library.
- **Negative:** Subject + was/were + **not** + main verb ending in -ing + object.
Example: They weren't studying at home.
- **Question:** Was/were+ subject + main verb ending in -ing + object? Were you studying at home?
- **Negative question:** Was/were + not + subject + main verb ending in -ing + object? Example: Weren't you studying at home?
- **Answers:** Yes, + subject + was/were- No, +subject+not+was/were
Examples: Yes, I was- No, I was not.

Spanish equivalent tense: In Spanish this is not really a tense, it is called "Perífrase verbal durativa" Example: I was studying in the library. *Estuve/Estaba estudiando en la biblioteca.* The past continuous can also be translated as the "Pretérito imperfecto". Example: I don't know what he was saying- *No sé lo que él decía.*

Getting more fluency

The past continuous is a relative simple tense to learn and reproduce, so we will focus our attention on learning sentences by heart to gain fluency.

As there aren't many examples of the past continuous in one chapter, I have listed sentences in this tense that can be found in the first 15 chapters of the audiobook below.

Please, listen to them and repeat them aloud.

Remember that you are transforming your way speaking in order to sound more natural and fluent; therefore it's important that you pay attention to all of the details when repeating the sounds, such as the vibrant "ss" of the word "was".

Spanish	English	Phonetics	Approximate Pronunciation
Basil Hallward estaba sentado admirando el cuadro	Basil Hallward was sitting admiring the painting (Chapter 1)	ˈbæzl, ˈhɒlwərd wəz ˈsɪtɪŋ ədˈmaɪərɪŋ ðə ˈpeɪntɪŋ	Bássel hólward wuass síting ad'mairing de péinting
Él estaba sentado junto al piano	He was sitting at the piano (Chap. 2)	hi wəz ˈsɪtɪŋ ət ðə piˈænəʊ	Hi wuass síting at de piánou
La duquesa de Harley, que estaba sentada enfrente	The Duchess of Harley who was sitting in front (Chap. 3)	ðə ˈdʌtʃɪs əv ˈhɑːli huː wəz ˈsɪtɪŋ ɪn frʌnt	De déches of hárli hu wuass síting in front
Al salir por la puerta	As he was going out of the door (Chap. 3)	əz hi wəz ˈgəʊɪŋ aʊt əv ðə dɔː	As hi wuass góing aut of the dor
Mientras estábamos sentados uno junto al otro	While we were sitting next to each other (Chap. 6)	wai l wi wə ˈsɪtɪŋ nekst tu iːtʃ ˈlðə	Wuail wi wuer síting nekst tu ich ader
Él no sabía lo que estaba diciendo	He didn't know what he was saying (Chap. 7)	hi ˈdɪdnt nəʊ ˈwɒt hi wəz ˈseɪɪŋ	Hi didnt nóu wuat hi wuass séing
Cuando Dorian estaba desayunando	When Dorian was having breakfast (Chap. 9)	wen ˈdɔːiən wəz ˈhævɪŋ ˈbrekfəst	Wuen dórian wuass háving brékfast
Mientras Sybil Vane yacía muerta	As Sybil Vane was lying dead (Chap. 9)	əz ˈsɪbəl veɪn wəz ˈlaɪɪŋ ded	As sibil vein wuass laing ded
Él estaba sudando	He was sweating (Chap. 9)	hi wəz ˈswetɪŋ	Hi wuas sueting
Él pensó acerca del daño que le estaba haciendo a su alma	He thought about the harm he was doing to his soul (Chap. 10)	hi ˈθɔːt əˈbaʊt ðə hɑːm hi wəz ˈduːɪŋ tu ɪz soul	Hi zót abaut de harm hi wuas dúing tu his soul
Dorian Gray volvía a su casa desde la casa de Lord Henry	Dorian Gray was returning home from Lord Henry's (Chap. 11)	ˈdɔːiən greɪ wəz rɪˈtɜːnɪŋ hæʊm frəm lɔːd ˈhenrɪz	Dórian gréi wuass reérning houm from lórd henriss
Yo estaba muy interesado en verle (a usted)	I was very interested in seeing you (Chap. 11)	ˈaɪ wəz ˈveri ˈɪntrestɪd ɪn ˈsiːɪŋ ju	Ai wuass véri íntrested in síing iu
Las cosas horribles que (ellos) decían de Dorian Gray	The horrible things they were saying about Dorian Gray (Chap. 11)	ðə ˈhɒrəbl, ˈθɪŋz ˈðeɪ wə ˈseɪɪŋ əˈbaʊt ˈdɔːiən	De hóribel zings dei wuer seing abáut dórian gréi

		greɪ	
El joven estaba apoyado en la pared, mirando indiferente	The young man was leaning against the wall, looking indifferent (Chap 12)	ðə ʒʌŋ mæn wəz 'li:nɪŋ ə'ɡenst ðə wɔ:l 'lʊkɪŋ ɪn'dɪfrənt	De ian man wuass líning agénst de wuol luking indiferent
Dorian Gray lloraba junto a la ventana	Dorian Gray was crying next to the window (Chap 12)	'dɔ:ɪən greɪ wəz 'kraɪɪŋ nekst tə ðə 'wɪndəʊ	Dórian gréi wuass kráing nekst tú de wuɪndou
El pintor que estaba sentado en una silla	The painter who was sitting on a chair (Chap .12)	ðə 'peɪntə hu: wəz 'sɪtɪŋ ɒn ə tʃeə	De péinter hu wuass síting ona cher
Él se marchaba a París en el tren de la medianoche	He was leaving for Paris by train at midnight (Chap. 12)	hi wəz 'li:vɪŋ fə 'pærɪs baɪ treɪn ət 'mɪdnɑɪt	Hi wuass líving for péris bai trein at mídnait
Él iba estar fuera de Inglaterra por una larga temporada	He was going to be away from England for a long time (Chap 12)	hi wəz 'gəʊɪŋ tə bi ə'weɪ frəm 'ɪŋɡlənd fər ə 'lɒŋ 'taɪm	Hi wuass góing to bi owuéi from íngland for a long táim
El joven estaba durmiendo en su cama	The young man was sleeping in his bed (Chap 13)	ðə ʒʌŋ mæn wəz 'sli:pɪŋ ɪn ɪz bed 	De iang man wuass ssliping in his bed
Él se estaba arrepintiéndolo de haber venido	He was regretting having come (Chap 14)	hi wəz rɪ'gretɪŋ 'hævɪŋ kʌm	Hi wuass regreting having kam
Un revólver le apuntaba a la cabeza	A revolver was pointing at his head (Chap 15)	ə rɪ'vɒlvə wəz 'pɔɪntɪŋ ət ɪz hed 	A rɪ'volver wuass póinting at his hed
Él temblaba de pies a cabeza	He was shaking from head to toe (Chap 15)	hi wəz 'feɪkɪŋ frəm hed tə təʊ	Hí wuass shéiking from hed tu tóu

To sum up:

The past continuous is an easy tense to learn and reproduce, so it's a good idea to repeat sentences in this tense to increase your fluency and improve your pronunciation.

Homework

Continue looking for the past continuous from chapters 16 to 19.

Try to ask and answer questions aloud using the sentences that you find in the past continuous, for example:

- A revolver was pointing at his head.
- Was a revolver pointing at his head?
- Yes, it was.
- No, it wasn't.