

When and While

Past Simple + Past Continuous
Explicación sencilla para clase

Idea principal:

Usamos Past Continuous para una acción larga que estaba en progreso en el pasado.

Usamos Past Simple para una acción corta o terminada.

Past Continuous: I was working.

Past Simple: The alarm rang.

1. Uso de WHEN

When se usa normalmente con la acción corta que interrumpe una acción más larga.

Past Continuous + when + Past Simple

I was checking the equipment when the alarm rang.

She was writing the report when the supervisor called.

They were cleaning the area when the machine stopped.

Explicación: la acción larga estaba pasando primero. Después, una acción corta la interrumpió.

When al inicio

También podemos empezar la oración con when. En ese caso, usamos coma después de la primera parte.

When + Past Simple, Past Continuous

When the alarm rang, I was working.

When the supervisor called, she was writing the report.

When the machine stopped, they were cleaning the area.

2. Uso de WHILE

While se usa con una acción larga que estaba en progreso.

Past Simple + while + Past Continuous

The accident happened while they were moving the boxes.

The machine stopped while we were working.

He fell while he was carrying the tools.

Explicación: after while, we often use Past Continuous because it shows the background action.

Dos acciones al mismo tiempo

Usamos while cuando dos acciones largas estaban ocurriendo al mismo tiempo en el pasado.

Past Continuous + while + Past Continuous

I was taking notes while the instructor was explaining the procedure.

She was checking the labels while her partner was organizing the materials.

They were wearing gloves while they were handling chemicals.

Regla rápida

Use when with a short action that interrupts.

I was working when the phone rang.

Use while with a long action in progress.

The phone rang while I was working.

Use while for two long actions happening at the same time.

I was writing while she was reading.

Mini practice

Complete with when or while.

1. I was studying ____ my mother called me.
2. The supervisor arrived ____ we were cleaning the room.
3. She was checking the labels ____ he was preparing the materials.
4. The machine stopped ____ they were working.
5. We were taking notes ____ the instructor explained the safety rule.

Answer key:

1. when
2. while
3. while
4. while
5. when