

Week 8
Supplementary material
English for migrant activists

WHAT IS PAST CONTINUOUS TENSE?

The Past Continuous tense is used to talk about actions that were happening at a specific time in the past.

Structure:

- **Positive:** Subject + was/were + verb (-ing)
 - *She was waiting at the immigration office.*
 - *They were looking for a safe place to stay.*
- **Negative:** Subject + was/were + not + verb (-ing)
 - *He was not working last night.*
 - *We were not attending the protest.*
- **Question:** Was/Were + subject + verb (-ing)?
 - *Was she applying for a visa?*
 - *Were they discussing their rights?*

Common Uses:

- Talking about an action happening at a specific past time: *At 10 AM, the migrants were waiting in line.*
- Describing background actions: *While she was talking to the officer, others were filling out forms.*
- Showing two past actions happening at the same time: *They were protesting while the police were watching.*

Examples Related to Migrant Issues

1. *The workers were demanding better wages during the meeting.*
2. *She was preparing her documents when the office closed.*

3. *They were traveling to the border when they lost their passports.*
4. *Was the organization providing food and shelter at that time?*
5. *He was not studying English before he arrived in this country.*
6. *While the migrants were protesting, the government was making new policies.*
7. *Were you attending the legal rights workshop last week?*

Tip:

- Use "while" to connect two past continuous actions (*While he was filling out the forms, she was speaking to a lawyer.*)
- Use "when" to show that a past simple action interrupted a past continuous action (*She was waiting in line when the office closed.*)

Practice Exercises

A. Fill in the blanks with the correct past continuous form

1. She _____ (wait) for the immigration officer when they called her name.
2. They _____ (not receive) any help while they were crossing the border.
3. The organization _____ (assist) migrants at the shelter.
4. He _____ (not look) for a job when he arrived in the country.
5. _____ you _____ (attend) the protest when the police arrived?

B. Rewrite the sentences in negative form

1. The migrants were filling out visa applications. → _____
2. She was speaking with a lawyer. → _____
3. The workers were organizing a strike. → _____
4. He was staying in a temporary shelter. → _____
5. They were traveling to the immigration office. → _____

C. Discussion Questions

- What were you doing when you first arrived in this country?
- How were organizations helping migrants in the past?
- Can you think of a situation where the past continuous tense is useful when discussing migrant issues?