The past continuous tense

The past continuous tense has these uses:

1. **It is used to talk about something that was happening at some time in the past.**
   The action had not finished at a particular time in the past.

   Three years ago I was living in Germany.
   I was talking to my friend at ten o'clock last night. (I began talking to her before ten o'clock. I was talking to her after ten o'clock.)

2. **It is used to talk about something that was happening when another past action was completed.**
   It is used with the past simple tense.

   I was walking down the street when I saw the 'Sale' sign.
   We were playing when my brother ran away and caught a bus.

   My phone rang when I was driving home.
   (Simple Past)  (Past Continuous)

3. **It is used to talk about two actions in the past that happened at the same time and were continuous.**

   I was talking to my friend while I was washing the dishes.
   The sun was shining while we were walking in the park.
   She was working on her computer while she was talking to her friend.

**Past Continuous Forms - Positive**

- I was eating an apple.
- You were eating an apple.
- He / she / it was eating an apple.
- We were eating apples.
- They were eating apples.

**Past Continuous Forms - Negative**

- I wasn't (was not) eating an apple.
- You weren't (were not) eating an apple.
- He / she / it wasn't (was not) eating an apple.
- We weren't (were not) eating apples.
- They weren't (were not) eating apples.

**Past Continuous Forms - Question**

- What was I eating?
- What were you eating?
- What was he / she / it eating?
- What were we eating?
- What were they eating?
The past continuous tense is made with **was / were + the present participle.**

*(The present participle is the base of a verb + ing e.g. talk --> talking).*

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**Exercise 1**
Write the present participle of these verbs. *(Be careful with your spelling!)* Two are done for you as examples.

- rain --> **raining**
- walk --> **walking**
- come
- choose
- drive
- ride
- stop
- run
- leave
- cut
- put

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**Exercise 2**
Complete these sentences with the verb in the brackets. Put each verb in the past continuous tense.

a. I lost my keys when I ________ home. *(walk)*
b. It was raining while we ________ dinner. *(have)*
c. I saw the department stores when I ________ on the bus *(sit)*
d. Her phone rang while she ________ to her new boss. *(talk)*
e. My friends ________ to work when they heard the news on the radio. *(drive)*
f. He ________ his bicycle when the cat ran across the road. *(ride)*
g. We couldn't go to the beach yesterday because it ________. *(rain)*
h. It was a lovely day. The sun was shining and the birds ________ in the trees. *(sing)*

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**Answer Key:**
Exercise 1: standing, working, buying, sleeping, going, eating, listening, coming, choosing, driving, riding, stopping, running, leaving, cutting, putting.

Exercise 2: a. was walking, b. were having, c. was sitting, d. was talking, e. were driving, f. was riding, g. was raining, h. were singing