8.8 Past Continuous Tense (Year 7): 30-minute Pack

about 30 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

Blackout at Riverside Market

Source written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). Written for Year 7 grammar practice, July 2026.

The stallholders were packing away the last of the strawberries when the first generator spluttered and died. Overhead, strings of fairy lights were still glowing faintly, flickering now and then like a failing heartbeat. Yusuf had been serving customers for nearly an hour when the lights above his stall suddenly went out completely, plunging his stall into darkness. Somewhere near the bridge, a busker was singing an old folk song, her guitar case scattered with coins, and for a moment nobody noticed the darkness spreading across the square. Two stallholders were arguing about whose generator had failed first when a voice on a loudspeaker asked everyone to stay calm. Meanwhile, several students were filming the chaos on their phones, more curious than afraid. By the time the emergency lighting flickered on, the market had fallen almost silent, and only the busker's guitar was still playing, quietly, into the dark.

1 These sentences are taken from the source text above. Underline the past continuous verb phrase in each one, then state whether its subject is singular or plural.

(a) The stallholders were packing away the last of the strawberries when the first generator spluttered and died. **(2)**

(b) Overhead, strings of fairy lights were still glowing faintly, flickering now and then like a failing heartbeat. **(2)**

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(c) Somewhere near the bridge, a busker was singing an old folk song, her guitar case scattered with coins. **(2)**

(d) Meanwhile, several students were filming the chaos on their phones, more curious than afraid. **(2)**

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2 Complete each sentence with the correct past continuous form of the verb in brackets. Take care with the spelling of the -ing ending.

(a) The generator ___ (splutter) ominously before it finally died. **(1)**

(b) The children ___ (lie) on the grass, watching the fireworks. **(1)**

(c) The dog ___ (run) circles around the picnic blanket. **(1)**

(d) Two engineers ___ (fit) new cables along the corridor. **(1)**

(e) The market ___ (die) down for the evening when the storm broke. **(1)**

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3 Combine each pair of sentences into one sentence, using the connective shown and the past continuous tense, to show that one action was already in progress when something else happened.

(a) The teacher wrote on the board. The fire alarm rang. (Use: when) **(2)**

(b) The rain grew heavier. We walked home. (Use: as, with the walking clause fronted) **(2)**

(c) Priya packed her rucksack. Her brother shouted up the stairs. (Use: just as) **(2)**

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4 The paragraph below has four errors: two incorrect helping verbs and two missing -ing endings. Rewrite the paragraph, correcting all four errors.

'Just before the blackout, the twins was helping their mother carry crates to the van, while their little sister was watch the stall. Somewhere behind them, the generator were humming loudly, and a stray cat was sleep under a table, undisturbed by the chaos around it.'

(4)

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5 The paragraph below has four errors affecting the past continuous tense: two incorrect helping verbs, one missing -ing ending, and one verb left wrongly in the present tense. Rewrite the paragraph, correcting all four errors.

'Backstage, the youngest performers was practising their lines nervously while the stage manager checked the lighting rig. Two students was arguing quietly about who had forgotten the props box, and the lead actor were pace up and down, muttering her opening speech under her breath. Meanwhile, the audience settle into their seats, unaware that the curtain nearly did not rise at all.'

(6)

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6 Look again at this sentence from the source text: 'Yusuf had been serving customers for nearly an hour when the lights above his stall suddenly went out completely.'

(a) Which tense is used in 'had been serving'? **(1)**

- ☐ A) Past continuous
- ☐ B) Past perfect continuous
- ☐ C) Present perfect

(b) Explain what this tense choice adds to the sentence that the simple past continuous ('Yusuf was serving customers') would not. **(2)**

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7 Look at these two versions of the same moment.

A) The lights went out.
B) The lights were flickering, dimming, then finally, they went out.

Explain the difference in effect between version A and version B.

(3)

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8 Look again at the opening sentence of the source text: 'The stallholders were packing away the last of the strawberries when the first generator spluttered and died.' Explain the effect of the writer's use of the past continuous tense here.

(2)

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9 Rewrite each active sentence in the passive voice, keeping the past continuous tense.

(a) Firefighters were checking the wiring when the alarm sounded. **(2)**

(b) Engineers were repairing the generator all afternoon. **(2)**

(c) The council were monitoring the situation closely. **(2)**

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Mark scheme · 8.8 Past Continuous Tense (Year 7): 30-minute Pack

Question 1

(a) were packing away underlined cao **B1**

(a) plural (the stallholders) cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **were packing away; plural**

(b) were still glowing underlined cao **B1**

(b) plural (strings of fairy lights) cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **were still glowing; plural**

(c) was singing underlined cao **B1**

(c) singular (a busker) cao **B1**

(c) Answer: **was singing; singular**

(d) were filming underlined cao **B1**

(d) plural (several students) cao **B1**

(d) Answer: **were filming; plural**

Question 2

(a) was spluttering cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **was spluttering**

(b) were lying cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **were lying**

(c) was running cao **B1**

(c) Answer: **was running**

(d) were fitting cao **B1**

(d) Answer: **were fitting**

(e) was dying cao **B1**

(e) Answer: **was dying**

Question 3

(a) was writing used correctly for the ongoing background action **B1**

(a) when used correctly to introduce the interrupting simple past action, cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **The teacher was writing on the board when the fire alarm rang.**

(b) were walking used correctly for the ongoing background action **B1**

(b) as used correctly and a comma placed after the fronted subordinate clause, cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **As we were walking home, the rain grew heavier.**

(c) was packing used correctly for the ongoing background action **B1**

(c) just as used correctly to link the two clauses, cao **B1**

(c) Answer: **Priya was packing her rucksack just as her brother shouted up the stairs.**

Question 4

'was helping' corrected to 'were helping' (the twins is a plural subject) cao **B1**

'was watch' corrected to 'was watching' (missing -ing ending restored) cao **B1**

'were humming' corrected to 'was humming' (the generator is a singular subject) cao **B1**

'was sleep' corrected to 'was sleeping' (missing -ing ending restored) cao **B1**

Answer: **Just before the blackout, the twins were helping their mother carry crates to the van, while their little sister was watching the stall. Somewhere behind them, the generator was humming loudly, and a stray cat was sleeping under a table, undisturbed by the chaos around it.**

Question 5

Level 0 No accurate corrections made; errors remain uncorrected or new errors introduced. **0**

Level 1 One or two errors corrected (e.g. one subject-verb agreement error), with limited overall accuracy. **1-2**

Level 2 Most errors corrected, including at least one subject-verb agreement error and the missing -ing ending, with generally secure past continuous forms. **3-4**

Level 3 All four errors corrected accurately, demonstrating secure, consistent control of the past continuous tense throughout the whole paragraph. **5-6**

Indicative content:

- 'was practising' corrected to 'were practising' to agree with the plural subject 'the youngest performers'
- 'Two students was arguing' corrected to 'Two students were arguing' to agree with the plural subject 'Two students'
- 'were pace' corrected to 'was pacing', matching the singular subject 'the lead actor' and restoring the missing -ing ending
- 'settle' corrected to 'was settling' (also accept 'were settling', since a collective noun such as 'audience' may take a plural verb in UK English, especially with 'their seats'), changing the present tense verb to the past continuous so it matches the tense of the rest of the paragraph
- Overall rewrite is fluent, grammatically accurate Standard English with the past continuous tense used consistently and accurately throughout

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Question 6

(a) B) Past perfect continuous **B1**

(a) Answer: **B**

(b) identifies that 'had been serving' shows the action had already been going on for a stated period of time (nearly an hour) before the interruption (oe) **B1**

(b) develops this: it emphasises the duration/build-up of the action leading up to the interruption, whereas 'was serving' only shows the action in progress at that moment, without stressing how long it had already continued (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: **It shows that the serving had already been going on for a stated length of time (nearly an hour) before the interruption, emphasising the build-up and duration of the routine. 'Was serving' would only show the action in progress at that moment, without stressing how long it had already continued.**

Question 7

identifies that B uses the past continuous to show the process happening gradually, in stages, whereas A presents it as one instantaneous, completed event (oe) **B1**

links this to effect on the reader, e.g. B builds tension/suspense by slowing the moment down and letting the reader anticipate what is coming, whereas A feels abrupt and immediate (oe) **B1**

makes a specific, developed reference to the language/structure, e.g. the short final clause 'they went out' feels sudden precisely because it follows the drawn-out continuous stages before it (oe) **B1**

Answer: **Version B uses the past continuous ('were flickering, dimming') to stretch the moment out into ongoing stages, building tension and letting the reader anticipate the outage, whereas version A presents the same event as a single, completed action, which feels abrupt and sudden. The short final clause in B, 'they went out', lands with more impact precisely because it follows the drawn-out continuous build-up.**

Question 8

identifies that the past continuous presents the packing away as an ordinary, ongoing background action **B1**

links this to effect, e.g. it creates a calm, routine scene that is then abruptly disrupted by the short, completed simple past action (spluttered and died), heightening the contrast/shock for the reader (oe) **B1**

Answer: **The past continuous shows the packing away as an ordinary, unfinished background action, creating a calm and routine opening scene. This makes the sudden, completed simple past action that follows (the generator spluttered and died) feel more abrupt and disruptive by contrast, immediately signalling that something has gone wrong.**

Question 9

(a) correct passive continuous form 'was being checked' (agreeing with the singular subject 'the wiring') **B1**

(a) agent phrase 'by firefighters' correctly retained or naturally omitted, with the rest of the sentence unchanged, cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **The wiring was being checked (by firefighters) when the alarm sounded.**

(b) correct passive continuous form 'was being repaired' (agreeing with the singular subject 'the generator') **B1**

(b) agent phrase 'by engineers' correctly retained or naturally omitted, with the rest of the sentence unchanged, cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **The generator was being repaired (by engineers) all afternoon.**

(c) correct passive continuous form 'was being monitored' (agreeing with the singular subject 'the situation') **B1**

(c) adverb 'closely' and agent phrase 'by the council' correctly retained/repositioned, cao **B1**

(c) Answer: **The situation was being monitored closely by the council.**

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