

Present continuous (I am doing)

A Study this example situation:

Sarah is in her car. She is on her way to work.
She **is driving** to work.

This means: she is driving *now*, at the time of speaking.
The action is not finished.

Am/is/are + -ing is the *present continuous*:

I	am	(= I'm)	driving
he/she/it	is	(= he's etc.)	working
we/you/they	are	(= we're etc.)	doing etc.

B **I am doing** something = I'm in the middle of doing it; I've started doing it and I haven't finished:

- ☐ Please don't make so much noise. **I'm trying** to work. (*not* I try)
- ☐ 'Where's Mark?' 'He's **having** a shower.' (*not* He has a shower)
- ☐ Let's go out now. It **isn't raining** any more. (*not* It doesn't rain)
- ☐ (at a party) Hi, Jane. **Are you enjoying** the party? (*not* Do you enjoy)
- ☐ What's all that noise? What's **going on**? (= What's happening?)

Sometimes the action is not happening at the time of speaking. For example:

Steve is talking to a friend on the phone. He says:



I'm reading a really good book at the moment.
It's about a man who ...

Steve is not reading the book at the time of speaking.
He means that he has started it, but has not finished it yet.
He is in the middle of reading it.

Some more examples:

- ☐ Kate wants to work in Italy, so she's **learning** Italian. (but perhaps she isn't learning Italian at the time of speaking)
- ☐ Some friends of mine **are building** their own house. They hope to finish it next summer.

C You can use the present continuous with **today / this week / this year** etc. (periods around now):

- ☐ A: You're **working hard today**. (*not* You work hard today)
- B: Yes, I have a lot to do.
- ☐ The company I work for **isn't doing** so well **this year**.

D We use the present continuous when we talk about changes happening around now, especially with these verbs:

get change become increase rise fall grow improve begin start

- ☐ **Is** your English **getting** better? (*not* Does your English get better)
- ☐ The population of the world **is increasing** very fast. (*not* increases)
- ☐ At first I didn't like my job, but I'm **beginning** to enjoy it now. (*not* I begin)

Exercises

1.1 The sentences on the right follow those on the left. Which sentence goes with which?

- 1 Please don't make so much noise.
- 2 I need to eat something soon.
- 3 I don't have anywhere to live right now.
- 4 We need to leave soon.
- 5 They don't need their car any more.
- 6 Things are not so good at work.
- 7 It isn't true what they said.
- 8 We're going to get wet.

- a It's getting late.
- b They're lying.
- c It's starting to rain.
- d They're trying to sell it.
- e I'm getting hungry.
- f ~~I'm trying to work.~~
- g I'm looking for an apartment.
- h The company is losing money.

- 1 f
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

1.2 Complete the conversations.

- 1 A: I saw Brian a few days ago.
B: Oh, did you? What's he doing these days? (what / he / do)
A: He's at university.
B:? (what / he / study)
A: Psychology.
B: it? (he / enjoy)
A: Yes, he says it's a very good course.
- 2 A: Hi, Nicola. How? (your new job / go)
B: Not bad. It wasn't so good at first, but better now.
(it / get)
A: What about Daniel? Is he OK?
B: Yes, but his work right now. (he / not / enjoy)
He's been in the same job for a long time and to get bored
with it. (he / begin)

1.3 Put the verb into the correct form, positive (I'm doing etc.) or negative (I'm not doing etc.).

- 1 Please don't make so much noise. I'm trying (I / try) to work.
- 2 Let's go out now. It isn't raining (it / rain) any more.
- 3 You can turn off the radio. (I / listen) to it.
- 4 Kate phoned me last night. She's on holiday in France. (she / have)
a great time and doesn't want to come back.
- 5 I want to lose weight, so this week (I / eat) lunch.
- 6 Andrew has just started evening classes. (he / learn) Japanese.
- 7 Paul and Sally have had an argument. (they / speak)
to each other.
- 8 (I / get) tired. I need a rest.
- 9 Tim (work) today. He's taken the day off.
- 10 (I / look) for Sophie. Do you know where she is?

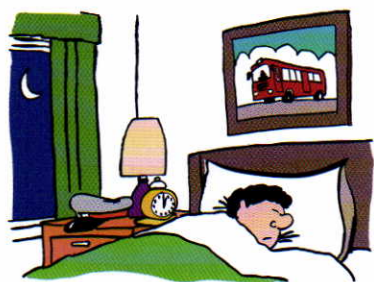
1.4 Complete the sentences using the following verbs:

start get ~~increase~~ change rise

- 1 The population of the world is increasing very fast.
- 2 The world Things never stay the same.
- 3 The situation is already bad and it worse.
- 4 The cost of living Every year things are more expensive.
- 5 The weather to improve. The rain has stopped, and the wind isn't
as strong.

Present simple (I do)

A Study this example situation:



Alex is a bus driver, but now he is in bed asleep.
He is not driving a bus. (He is asleep.)

but He **drives** a bus. (He is a bus driver.)

Drive(s)/work(s)/do(es) etc. is the *present simple*:

I/we/you/they	drive/work/do etc.
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he/she/it	drives/works/does etc.
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B We use the present simple to talk about things in general. We use it to say that something happens all the time or repeatedly, or that something is true in general:

- ☐ Nurses **look** after patients in hospitals.
- ☐ I usually **go** away at weekends.
- ☐ The earth **goes** round the sun.
- ☐ The cafe **opens** at 7.30 in the morning.

Remember:

I **work** ... but He **works** ... They **teach** ... but My sister **teaches** ...

For spelling (-s or -es), see Appendix 6.

C We use **do/does** to make questions and negative sentences:

do does	I/we/you/they he/she/it	work? drive? do?	I/we/you/they he/she/it	don't doesn't	work drive do
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- ☐ I come from Canada. Where **do** you **come** from?
- ☐ I **don't go** away very often.
- ☐ What **does** this word **mean**? (*not* What means this word?)
- ☐ Rice **doesn't grow** in cold climates.

In the following examples, **do** is also the main verb (do you **do** / doesn't **do** etc.):

- ☐ 'What **do** you **do**?' 'I work in a shop.'
- ☐ He's always so lazy. He **doesn't do** anything to help.

D We use the present simple to say how often we do things:

- ☐ I **get** up at 8 o'clock **every morning**.
- ☐ **How often** do you **go** to the dentist?
- ☐ Julie **doesn't drink** tea **very often**.
- ☐ Robert usually **goes** away **two or three times a year**.

E I **promise** / I **apologise** etc.

Sometimes we do things by saying something. For example, when you *promise* to do something, you can say 'I **promise** ...'; when you *suggest* something, you can say 'I **suggest** ...':

- ☐ I **promise** I won't be late. (*not* I'm promising)
- ☐ 'What do you **suggest** I do?' 'I **suggest** that you ...'

In the same way we say: I **apologise** ... / I **advise** ... / I **insist** ... / I **agree** ... / I **refuse** ... etc.

Exercises

2.1 Complete the sentences using the following verbs:

cause(s) connect(s) drink(s) live(s) open(s) ~~speaks(s)~~ take(s)

- 1 Tanya speaks German very well.
- 2 I don't often coffee.
- 3 The swimming pool at 7.30 every morning.
- 4 Bad driving many accidents.
- 5 My parents in a very small flat.
- 6 The Olympic Games place every four years.
- 7 The Panama Canal the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

2.2 Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 Julie doesn't drink (not / drink) tea very often.
- 2 What time (the banks / close) here?
- 3 I've got a car, but I (not / use) it much.
- 4 'Where (Ricardo / come) from?' 'From Cuba.'
- 5 'What (you / do)?' 'I'm an electrician.'
- 6 It (take) me an hour to get to work. How long (it / take) you?
- 7 Look at this sentence. What (this word / mean)?
- 8 David isn't very fit. He (not / do) any sport.

2.3 Use the following verbs to complete the sentences. Sometimes you need the negative:

believe eat flow ~~go~~ ~~grow~~ make rise tell translate

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 The earth <u>goes</u> round the sun. | 7 An interpreter from one language into another. |
| 2 Rice <u>doesn't grow</u> in Britain. | 8 Liars are people who the truth. |
| 3 The sun in the east. | 9 The River Amazon into the Atlantic Ocean. |
| 4 Bees honey. | |
| 5 Vegetarians meat. | |
| 6 An atheist in God. | |

2.4 You ask Lisa questions about herself and her family. Write the questions.

- 1 You know that Lisa plays tennis. You want to know how often. Ask her.
How often do you play tennis ?
- 2 Perhaps Lisa's sister plays tennis too. You want to know. Ask Lisa.
..... your sister ?
- 3 You know that Lisa reads a newspaper every day. You want to know which one. Ask her.
..... ?
- 4 You know that Lisa's brother works. You want to know what he does. Ask Lisa.
..... ?
- 5 You know that Lisa goes to the cinema a lot. You want to know how often. Ask her.
..... ?
- 6 You don't know where Lisa's grandparents live. You want to know. Ask Lisa.
..... ?

2.5 Complete using the following:

I apologise I insist I promise I recommend ~~I suggest~~

- 1 Mr Evans is not in the office today. I suggest you try calling him tomorrow.
- 2 I won't tell anybody what you said.
- 3 (in a restaurant) You must let me pay for the meal.
- 4 for what I did. It won't happen again.
- 5 The new restaurant in Hill Street is very good. it.

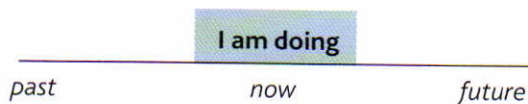
Present continuous and present simple 1
(I am doing and I do)

A

Compare:

Present continuous (I am doing)

We use the continuous for things happening at or around the time of speaking. The action is not complete.



- ☐ The water **is boiling**. Can you turn it off?
- ☐ Listen to those people. What language **are they speaking**?
- ☐ Let's go out. It **isn't raining** now.
- ☐ 'I'm busy.' 'What **are you doing**?'
- ☐ I'm **getting** hungry. Let's go and eat.
- ☐ Kate wants to work in Italy, so she's **learning** Italian.
- ☐ The population of the world **is increasing** very fast.

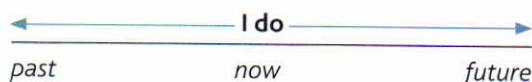
We use the continuous for *temporary* situations:

- ☐ I'm **living** with some friends until I find a place of my own.
- ☐ A: You're **working** hard today.
B: Yes, I have a lot to do.

See Unit 1 for more information.

Present simple (I do)

We use the simple for things in general or things that happen repeatedly.



- ☐ Water **boils** at 100 degrees Celsius.
- ☐ Excuse me, **do you speak** English?
- ☐ It **doesn't rain** very much in summer.
- ☐ What **do you usually do** at weekends?
- ☐ I always **get** hungry in the afternoon.
- ☐ Most people **learn** to swim when they are children.
- ☐ Every day the population of the world **increases** by about 200,000 people.

We use the simple for *permanent* situations:

- ☐ My parents **live** in London. They have lived there all their lives.
- ☐ Joe isn't lazy. He **works** hard most of the time.

See Unit 2 for more information.

B

I always do and I'm always doing

I always do (something) = I do it every time:

- ☐ I **always go** to work by car. (*not* I'm always going)

'I'm always doing something' has a different meaning. For example:



I'm always losing things = I lose things very often, perhaps too often, or more often than normal.

More examples:

- ☐ You're **always playing** computer games. You should do something more active. (= You play computer games too often)
- ☐ Tim is never satisfied. He's **always complaining**. (= He complains too much)

Exercises

3.1 Are the underlined verbs right or wrong? Correct them where necessary.

- 1 Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius. OK
- 2 The water boils. Can you turn it off? is boiling
- 3 Look! That man tries to open the door of your car.
- 4 Can you hear those people? What do they talk about?
- 5 The moon goes round the earth in about 27 days.
- 6 I must go now. It gets late.
- 7 I usually go to work by car.
- 8 'Hurry up! It's time to leave.' 'OK, I come.'
- 9 I hear you've got a new job. How do you get on?
- 10 Paul is never late. He's always getting to work on time.
- 11 They don't get on well. They're always arguing.

3.2 Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or present simple.

- 1 Let's go out. It isn't raining (it / not / rain) now.
- 2 Julia is very good at languages. She speaks (she / speak) four languages very well.
- 3 Hurry up! (everybody / wait) for you.
- 4 '..... (you / listen) to the radio?' 'No, you can turn it off.'
- 5 '..... (you / listen) to the radio every day?' 'No, just occasionally.'
- 6 The River Nile (flow) into the Mediterranean.
- 7 The river (flow) very fast today – much faster than usual.
- 8 (we / usually / grow) vegetables in our garden, but this year
..... (we / not / grow) any.
- 9 A: How's your English?
B: Not bad. I think (it / improve) slowly.
- 10 Rachel is in New York right now. (she / stay) at the Park Hotel.
..... (she / always / stay) there when she's in New York.
- 11 Can we stop walking soon? (I / start) to feel tired.
- 12 A: Can you drive?
B: (I / learn). My father (teach) me.
- 13 Normally (I / finish) work at five, but this week
..... (I / work) until six to earn a little more money.
- 14 My parents (live) in Manchester. They were born there and have never
lived anywhere else. Where (your parents / live)?
- 15 Sonia (look) for a place to live. (she / stay)
with her sister until she finds somewhere.
- 16 A: What (your brother / do)?
B: He's an architect, but (he / not / work) at the moment.
- 17 (at a party) (I / usually enjoy) parties, but
..... (I / not / enjoy) this one very much.

3.3 Finish B's sentences. Use **always -ing**.

- 1 A: I've lost my phone again.
B: Not again! You're always losing your phone.
- 2 A: The car has broken down again.
B: That car is useless. It
- 3 A: Look! You've made the same mistake again.
B: Oh no, not again! I
- 4 A: Oh, I've forgotten my glasses again.
B: Typical!

Past simple (I did)

A Study this example:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart **was** an Austrian musician and composer. He **lived** from 1756 to 1791. He **started** composing at the age of five and **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music. He **was** only 35 years old when he **died**.

Lived/started/wrote/was/died are all *past simple*.

B Very often the past simple ends in **-ed** (*regular verbs*):

- ☐ I work in a travel agency now. Before that I **worked** in a department store.
- ☐ We **invited** them to our party, but they **decided** not to come.
- ☐ The police **stopped** me on my way home last night.
- ☐ Laura **passed** her exam because she **studied** very hard.

For spelling (**stopped**, **studied** etc.), see Appendix 6.

But many verbs are *irregular*. The past simple does *not* end in **-ed**. For example:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| write → wrote | <input type="checkbox"/> Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music. |
| see → saw | <input type="checkbox"/> We saw Tanya in town a few days ago. |
| go → went | <input type="checkbox"/> I went to the cinema three times last week. |
| shut → shut | <input type="checkbox"/> It was cold, so I shut the window. |

C In questions and negatives we use **did/didn't** + *infinitive* (**enjoy/see/go** etc.):

I	enjoyed
she	saw
they	went

did	you	enjoy?
	she	see?
	they	go?

I		enjoy
she	didn't	see
they		go

- ☐ A: **Did** you **go** out last night?
- B: Yes, I **went** to the cinema, but I **didn't enjoy** the film much.
- ☐ 'When **did** Mr Thomas **die**?' 'About ten years ago.'
- ☐ They **didn't invite** us to the party, so we **didn't go**.
- ☐ '**Did** you **have** time to do the shopping?' 'No, I **didn't**.'

In the following examples, **do** is the main verb in the sentence (**did ... do / didn't do**):

- ☐ What **did** you **do** at the weekend? (*not* What did you at the weekend?)
- ☐ I **didn't do** anything. (*not* I didn't anything)

D The past of **be** (**am/is/are**) is **was/were**:

I/he/she/it	was/wasn't
we/you/they	were/weren't

was	I/he/she/it?
were	we/you/they?

Note that we do not use **did** in negatives and questions with **was/were**:

- ☐ I **was** angry because they **were** late.
- ☐ **Was** the weather good when you **were** on holiday?
- ☐ They **weren't** able to come because they **were** so busy.
- ☐ Did you go out last night or **were** you too tired?

Exercises

5.1 Read what Laura says about a typical working day:



Laura

I usually get up at 7 o'clock and have a big breakfast. I walk to work, which takes me about half an hour. I start work at 8.45. I never have lunch. I finish work at 5 o'clock. I'm always tired when I get home. I usually cook a meal in the evening. I don't usually go out. I go to bed at about 11 o'clock, and I always sleep well.

Yesterday was a typical working day for Laura. Write what she did or didn't do yesterday.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 She <u>got up</u> at 7 o'clock. | 7 _____ at 5 o'clock. |
| 2 She _____ a big breakfast. | 8 _____ tired when _____ home. |
| 3 She _____ | 9 _____ a meal yesterday evening. |
| 4 It _____ to get to work. | 10 _____ out yesterday evening. |
| 5 _____ at 8.45. | 11 _____ at 11 o'clock. |
| 6 _____ lunch. | 12 _____ well last night. |

5.2 Complete the sentences using the following verbs in the correct form:

buy catch cost fall hurt sell spend teach throw ~~write~~

- Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music.
- 'How did you learn to drive?' 'My father _____ me.'
- We couldn't afford to keep our car, so we _____ it.
- Dave _____ down the stairs this morning and _____ his leg.
- Joe _____ the ball to Sue, who _____ it.
- Ann _____ a lot of money yesterday. She _____ a dress which _____ £100.

5.3 You ask James about his holiday. Write your questions.

Hi. How are things?

Fine, thanks. I've just had a great holiday.

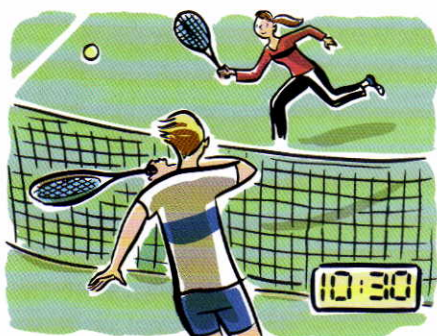
- Where did you go ?
To the U.S. We went on a trip from San Francisco to Denver.
- How _____ ? By car?
Yes, we hired a car in San Francisco.
- It's a long way to drive. How long _____ to get to Denver?
Two weeks.
- Where _____ ? In hotels?
Yes, small hotels or motels.
- _____ good?
Yes, but it was very hot – sometimes too hot.
- _____ the Grand Canyon?
Of course. It was wonderful.

5.4 Complete the sentences. Put the verb into the correct form, positive or negative.

- It was warm, so I took off my coat. (take)
- The film wasn't very good. I didn't enjoy it much. (enjoy)
- I knew Sarah was busy, so I _____ her. (disturb)
- We were very tired, so we _____ the party early. (leave)
- The bed was very uncomfortable. I _____ well. (sleep)
- The window was open and a bird _____ into the room. (fly)
- The hotel wasn't very expensive. It _____ much to stay there. (cost)
- I was in a hurry, so I _____ time to phone you. (have)
- It was hard carrying the bags. They _____ very heavy. (be)

Past continuous (I was doing)

A Study this example situation:



Yesterday Karen and Jim played tennis. They started at 10 o'clock and finished at 11.30.

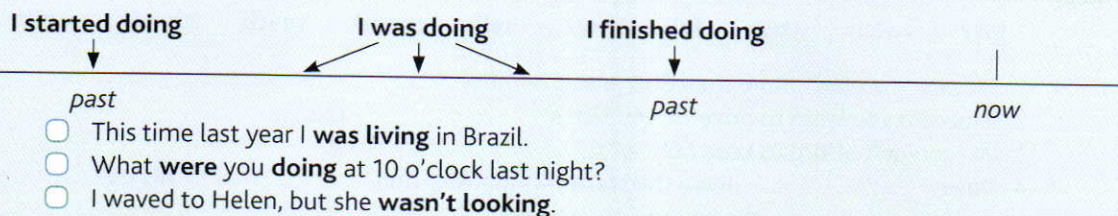
So, at 10.30 they **were playing** tennis.

They **were playing** = they were in the middle of playing. They had not finished playing.

Was/were -ing is the *past continuous*:

I/he/she/it	was	playing
we/you/they	were	doing
		working etc.

B **I was doing** something = I was in the middle of doing something at a certain time. The action or situation had already started before this time, but had not finished:



C Compare the *past continuous* (I was doing) and *past simple* (I did):

Past continuous (in the middle of an action)

- ☐ I **was walking** home when I met Dan. (in the middle of walking home)
- ☐ Kate **was watching** TV when we arrived.

Past simple (complete action)

- ☐ I **walked** home after the party last night. (= all the way, completely)
- ☐ Kate **watched** television a lot when she was ill last year.

D We often use the past simple and the past continuous together to say that something happened in the middle of something else:

- ☐ Matt **phoned** while we **were having** dinner.
- ☐ It **was raining** when I **got** up.
- ☐ I **saw** you in the park yesterday. You **were sitting** on the grass and **reading** a book.
- ☐ I **hurt** my back while I **was working** in the garden.

But we use the past simple to say that one thing happened after another:

- ☐ I **was walking** along the road when I **saw** Dan. So I **stopped**, and we **had** a chat.

Compare:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> When Karen arrived, we were having dinner. (= we had already started before she arrived) | <input type="checkbox"/> When Karen arrived, we had dinner. (= Karen arrived, and then we had dinner) |
|--|--|

E Some verbs (for example, **know** and **want**) are not normally used in the continuous (see Unit 4A):

- ☐ We were good friends. We **knew** each other well. (*not* We were knowing)
- ☐ I was enjoying the party, but Chris **wanted** to go home. (*not* was wanting)

Exercises

6.1 What were you doing at these times? Write sentences as in the examples. The past continuous is not always necessary (see the second example).

1 (at 8 o'clock yesterday evening) I was having dinner.

2 (at 5 o'clock last Monday) I was on a bus on my way home.

3 (at 10.15 yesterday morning) _____

4 (at 4.30 this morning) _____

5 (at 7.45 yesterday evening) _____

6 (half an hour ago) _____

6.2 Use your own ideas to complete the sentences. Use the past continuous.

1 Matt phoned while we were having dinner.

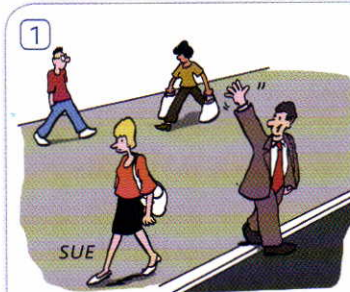
2 The doorbell rang while I _____.

3 The car began to make a strange noise when we _____.

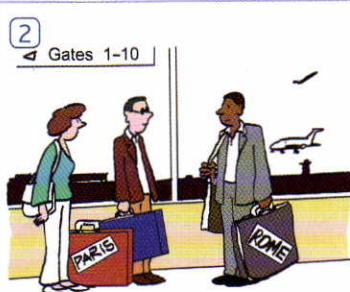
4 Jessica fell asleep while she _____.

5 The television was on, but nobody _____.

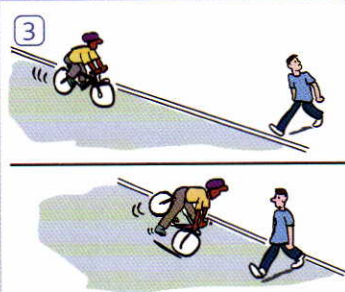
6.3 Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.



1 I saw (see) Sue in town yesterday, but she _____ (not / see) me. She _____ (look) the other way.



2 I _____ (meet) Tom and Jane at the airport a few weeks ago. They _____ (go) to Paris and I _____ (go) to Rome. We _____ (have) a chat while we _____ (wait) for our flights.



3 I _____ (cycle) home yesterday when a man _____ (step) out into the road in front of me. I _____ (go) quite fast, but luckily I _____ (manage) to stop in time and _____ (not / hit) him.

6.4 Put the verb into the correct form, past continuous or past simple.

1 Jenny was waiting (wait) for me when I arrived (arrive).

2 'What _____ (you / do) at this time yesterday?' 'I was asleep.'

3 '_____ (you / go) out last night?' 'No, I was too tired.'

4 How fast _____ (you / drive) when the accident _____ (happen)?

5 Sam _____ (take) a picture of me while I _____ (not / look).

6 We were in a very difficult position. We _____ (not / know) what to do.

7 I haven't seen Alan for ages. When I last _____ (see) him, he _____ (try) to find a job.

8 I _____ (walk) along the street when suddenly I _____ (hear) footsteps behind me. Somebody _____ (follow) me. I was scared and I _____ (start) to run.

9 When I was young, I _____ (want) to be a pilot.

10 Last night I _____ (drop) a plate when I _____ (do) the washing-up. Fortunately it _____ (not / break).