**past simple, past continuous, or *used to*?**

**Revise the basics**

**past simple**  
**1** When I was young, I **loved** playing outside.  
**2** We **didn’t live** in a big city. **NOT** *we didn’t lived*  
**3** Where **did** you **go** to school? **NOT** *did you went*

We use the past simple for **finished/ unfinished** **past/present/future** actions or states (when we say, ask, or **know/ don’t** **know** when they happened). We can use the past simple for things which happened at any time in the past – very recently, or a long time ago. The important thing is that we see them as **finished.**

**past continuous**  
**4** I **was watching** TV when you arrived. I was watching TV  
**5** She **wasn’t studying**when I called her. You arrived  
**6** What **were** you **doing** at 9.00 this morning?

We use the past continuous:

* to talk about an action or situation **finished/ in progress** at **any/a specific** time **in the past**.
* to describe a **past/present/ future** action **in progress/ finished action** which was interrupted by another action (expressed in the past \_\_\_simple\_\_\_\_\_).
* Two past actions in progress happening at the same time: I was cooking when my daughter was playing in her room.

***used to***  
**7** Luke **used to have** long hair.  
**8** They **didn’t use to live** in London. **NOT** *didn’t used to*  
**9** What music **did** you **use to like** when you were young? **NOT** *did you used to*

**past simple and past continuous**

MORE EXAMPLES  
1 I only **saw** him for a few minutes before he **left**.  
   Most people **didn’t own** a computer until about 1980.  
   Where **did** you **grow up**?  
2 What **were** you **doing** at 7.00 yesterday evening?  
   He **was texting** a friend when the accident **happened**.  
   While we **were having** our picnic, it **started** to rain.  
   Sorry, what**did** you **say**? I **wasn’t** **listening**.

***used to* and past simple**

EXAMPLES  
**1** I **used to be** very shy when I was a child.  
   Tim **used to go** to the theatre a lot when he lived in London.   
   We **used to live** in Rome.  
**2** I**was** very shy when I was a child.  
   Tim **often went** to the theatre when he lived in London.  
   We **lived** in Rome for ten years.

FORM  
**1** We use *used to* (not the past continuous) to describe **a habit or state/ action** that was true for a significant period in the past, and that **has now finished/ continues until now.**  
**2** We can also often use the past simple instead of *used to* especially with an adverbs of frequency, e.g. *usually, often, always, never, sometimes*  etc.  
• We use the past simple (not *used to*) when we specify \_how long\_\_\_\_\_ we did an action, **NOT** *We used to live in Rome for ten years*.