Past simple, continuous & perfect

10 practice questions • Padworth Learning Studio

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. I ___ dinner when the phone rang.

was cooking / had cook / have cooked

My answer: _____

2. The phone ___ while I was studying.

ring / rang / had been ring

My answer: _____

3. I could not print because the printer ___ out of paper earlier.

had run / has run / runs

My answer: _____

4. At 8 p.m. yesterday, they ___ a film.

were watching / have watched / watch

My answer: _____

5. She closed the window, picked up her bag and ___.

leaves / left / has left

My answer: _____

6. I ___ home when I saw the accident.

walk / was walking / had walk

My answer: _____

7. She opened the door and ___ inside.

stepped / was step / had stepping

My answer: _____

8. The ground was wet because it ___ earlier.

has rained / will rain / had rained

My answer: _____

9. While we ___ dinner, the lights went out.

have / were having / had have

My answer: _____

10. Choose the sentence with a background action and a shorter event.

I was reading when the phone rang. / I read when the phone was ring. / I had reading when the phone rings.

My answer: _____

Answer key & explanations

1. **was cooking** — Cooking was in progress when the call interrupted it.

2. **rang** — Rang is the completed event interrupting the background activity.

3. **had run** — Running out preceded the failed attempt to print.

4. **were watching** — The past continuous describes activity at a specified past moment.

5. **left** — The main events move forward in past simple.

6. **was walking** — Past continuous gives the background action in progress when another event occurred.

7. **stepped** — Past simple moves a narrative forward through completed events.

8. **had rained** — Past perfect shows that the rain came before the past observation.

9. **were having** — Past continuous describes the activity interrupted by the lights going out.

10. **I was reading when the phone rang.** — Was reading sets the background; rang gives the shorter completed event.