PAST CONTINUOUS

by Seda Sürel

INTRODUCTION

The past continuous indicates actions or states that were in progress at a certain time in the past. It is formed by combining the present continuous base with past tense endings.

1. Function
The past continuous expresses:

• actions ongoing at a specific past time
• background situations in the past
• actions that were interrupted by another past event

The reference point is past, with an internal duration.

2. Formation
The past continuous is built from:

verb stem → present continuous base (-(I)yor) → past endings

The present continuous base appears as:

• -ıyor
• -iyor
• -uyor
• -üyor

according to four-way vowel harmony:
  • bak-ıyor-
  • gel-iyor-
  • oku-yor-
  • yürü-yor-
Past endings (-du / -dı / -dü / -du and their person-marked forms) attach after this base.

3. Person Endings (with a sample verb)
Using gelmek as an example:

• Ben geliyordum.
• Sen geliyordun.
• O geliyordu.
• Biz geliyorduk.
• Siz geliyordunuz.
• Onlar geliyorlardı.

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Using yapmak:

- Ben yapıyordum.
- Sen yapıyordun.
- O yapıyordu.
- Biz yapıyorduk.
- Siz yapıyordunuz.
- Onlar yapıyorlardı.

These forms follow regular past tense person marking (-dum, -dun, -du, -duk, -dunuz, -dular) attached to the -yor base.

4. Consonant and Vowel Behavior
- The progressive base -yor remains invariant; the high vowel of -(I)yor does not surface separately.
- Verb stems that soften before -yor (e.g. git → gidiyor) keep this softened form in the past continuous:

git → gidiyordum
et → ediyordun

- The past endings (-dum, -dün, -duk, etc.) follow normal vowel harmony, as seen in the full forms (geliyordum, yapıyorduk).

No buffer consonant appears between -yor and the past endings.

Examples
- Geliyordum. — I was coming.
- Sen bakıyordun. — You were looking.
- O gidiyordu. — He/She was going.
- Biz çalışıyorduk. — We were working.
- Siz konuşuyordunuz. — You were speaking.
- Onlar bekliyorlardı. — They were waiting.
- Yağmur yağıyordu. — It was raining.

Notes
- The past continuous combines the present continuous base with past tense endings.
- Stem alternations (git → gidiyor, et → ediyor) are preserved in the past continuous.
- Person and number are marked by the same endings as in the simple past.