

～ていた

was doing (past continuous)

Romaji: **te ita**

～ていた is the past of ～ている: “was doing”, or “had done and it still showed”. 電話したとき、彼はまだ寝ていた is “When I rang, he was still asleep.” One form covers three jobs — an action in progress at a past moment (雨が降っていた), a state that held then (窓が開いていた), and a habit that has since stopped (毎朝走っていた). English splits those across “was -ing”, “had -ed” and “used to”, which is the whole reason this form feels slippery.

構文 CONSTRUCTION

Verb (て-form) + いた ・ polite ～ていました

本を読んでいました。 — I was reading a book.

A state still standing at a past moment

着いたとき、店はもう閉まっていた。 — When I arrived, the shop had already closed.

A habit that has since ended

学生のころ、毎日走っていました。 — When I was a student, I ran every day.

Casual contraction ～てた

何してたの? — What were you up to?

例文 EXAMPLES

① ^{でんわ}電話したとき、^{かれ}彼はまだ^ね寝ていた。

When I called, he was still asleep.

② ^つ着いたとき、^{みせ}店はもう^し閉まっていました。

When I arrived, the shop had already closed.

③ ^{がくせい}学生のころ、^{まいにち}毎日^ひピアノを弾いていました。

When I was a student, I played the piano every day.

注意点 NUANCES

- ▶ With change-of-state verbs — 閉まる, 死ぬ, 結婚する, 来る — ～ていた describes the result still in place, not the change happening over and over. 閉まっていた is “was closed”, never “was closing”.
- ▶ The plain past and ～ていた are not swappable. 食べた reports that the meal happened; 食べていた puts you inside it, and that is how it so often sets the scene for something that then interrupts.
- ▶ For a lapsed habit you need a time frame — 昔, 子供のころ, 学生時代. Without one, 毎日走っていました reads as a description of that particular period rather than a habit.
- ▶ In casual speech いた collapses to た: 見てた, 待ってた, 知らなかった. Worth recognising even if you write the full form.

やってみよう YOUR TURN

Set a scene from last night: what you were doing at eight with ～ていました, what state your room was in, and one thing you used to do as a child but no longer do.