

## Activity Type

Grammar and Speaking  
Activity: gap-fill, asking  
and answering questions  
from prompts, freer  
practice (group work)

## Focus

Past simple and past  
continuous

## Aim

To practice the past  
simple and past  
continuous by taking  
on the role of a famous  
inventor and finding  
out about accidental  
inventions.

## Preparation

Make one copy of the  
inventor cards for each  
group of five. Also,  
make one copy of the  
worksheet for each  
student.

## Level

Intermediate (B1)

## Time

30 minutes

## Introduction

In this past simple and past continuous activity, students take on the role of famous inventors and find out about accidental inventions in order to practice the two tenses.

## Procedure

Divide the students into groups of five. Give each student an inventor card and a copy of the worksheet. If you have some groups of four, give a strong student two cards.

Explain that each student is going to take on the role of a famous inventor, who invented something by accident. The students' task is to find out how the other inventors in their group accidentally created their inventions. In order to do this, they must ask questions to each inventor in their group to find out what happened.

To begin, students fill in the gaps on their inventor card, explaining what happened, using the past simple or past continuous form of the verbs in brackets.

When the students have finished, check the answers by going over the correct verb forms for each text, e.g. 1. were trying, etc.

Character cards - Answer key

1. You **were trying** to find a cure for headaches when you **mixed** wine and cocoa and **made** a tasty syrup, which **tasted** good when drunk with ice.
2. Your servants **were boiling** water when some leaves **fell** in the pot. It **smelt** delicious so you **tasted** some.
3. You **were growing** bacteria in your lab when you **saw** some mould in the cup. You then **noticed** that the mould **was not growing** next to the bacteria.
4. You **were stirring** chemicals with a stick when you **noticed** a lump at the end of it. When you **tried** to remove it, it **started** a fire.
5. You **were working** in a restaurant when a customer **said** that her chips **weren't** crispy enough, so you **sliced** a potato very thinly and **fried** it.

Next, draw the students' attention to the chart on the worksheet and elicit the two questions they need to ask to complete the chart:

What is your name?  
How did you accidentally create your invention?

(continued on the next page)

Note: This resource can be edited using a PDF editor.

## Activity Type

Grammar and Speaking Activity: gap-fill, asking and answering questions from prompts, freer practice (group work)

## Focus

Past simple and past continuous

## Aim

To practice the past simple and past continuous by taking on the role of a famous inventor and finding out about accidental inventions.

## Preparation

Make one copy of the inventor cards for each group of five. Also, make one copy of the worksheet for each student.

## Level

Intermediate (B1)

## Time

30 minutes

## Procedure continued

Have the students write their own information in the chart.

Students then go around their group asking the questions and noting down the answers for each inventor in the chart.

Remind the students that when they explain what happened, they need to change their text into the first person, e.g. 'I was trying to find a cure for headaches when I mixed wine and cocoa...'

When the students have finished, they use the information in the chart and inventions from a box to complete sentences, indicating what each invention was, who invented it, and how.

Students must write the verbs in brackets in the sentences in the past simple or past continuous form.

Finally, check the correct answers with the class.

Exercise B - Answer key

1. **Penicillin** was invented after Alexander Fleming **noticed** something strange while he **was observing** the growth of mould near bacteria.
2. **Matches** were invented by John Walker, who **was stirring** chemicals, when the stick he **was stirring** with suddenly caught fire.
3. **Tea** was invented by Shen Nong, who **smelt** something nice while he **was watching** his servants boil water.
4. **Coca-Cola** was invented by John Pemberton, who **combined** two ingredients while he **was searching** for a medical cure.
5. **Crisps** were invented by George Crum, who **was working** as a chef, after a customer's complaint about their meal **caused** him to prepare potatoes in a different way.

**1. John Pemberton**

You ..... (try) to find a cure for headaches when  
you ..... (mix) wine and cocoa and ..... (make) a tasty syrup,  
which ..... (taste) good when drunk with ice.

**2. Shen Nong**

Your servants ..... (boil) water when some leaves  
..... (fall) in the pot. It ..... (smell) delicious, so you  
..... (taste) some.

**3. Alexander Fleming**

You ..... (grow) bacteria in your lab when you  
..... (see) some mould in the cup. You then ..... (notice)  
that the mould ..... (not / grow) next to the bacteria.

**4. John Walker**

You ..... (stir) chemicals with a stick when you ..... (notice)  
a lump at the end of it. When you ..... (try) remove it, it  
..... (start) a fire.

**5. George Crum**

You ..... (work) in a restaurant when a customer  
..... (say) that her chips ..... (not / be) crispy enough,  
so you ..... (slice) a potato very thinly and ..... (fry) it.

**A. Ask questions to the other inventors in your group and complete the chart with their answers.**

Name	How they accidentally created their invention

**B. Use the information in the chart and the inventions from the box to complete the sentences below. Write the verbs in brackets in their past simple or past continuous form.**

Coca-Cola	matches	penicillin	tea	crisps
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- ..... was invented after Alexander Fleming ..... (notice) something strange while he ..... (observe) the growth of mould near bacteria.
- ..... were invented by John Walker, who ..... (stir) chemicals, when the stick he ..... (stir) with suddenly ..... (catch) fire.
- ..... was invented by Shen Nong, who ..... (smell) something nice while he ..... (watch) his servants boil water.
- ..... was invented by John Pemberton, who ..... (combine) two ingredients while he ..... (search) for a medical cure.
- ..... were invented by George Crum, who ..... (work) as a chef, after a customer's complaint about their meal ..... (cause) him to prepare potatoes in a different way.

