

State Verbs

State verbs are verbs which do not normally have continuous tenses because they describe a state rather than an action. These include:

- ◆ verbs which express likes and dislikes: *like, love, hate, dislike, enjoy, prefer, etc.*
e.g. Cathy *likes* romantic films.
- ◆ verbs of perception: *believe, know, notice, remember, forget, recognise, understand, realise, seem, think, etc.* e.g. I *don't believe* a word he's saying.
- ◆ verbs of the senses: *see, hear, feel, taste, look, smell, sound.* We often use *can* or *could* with these verbs when we refer to what we see, hear, etc. at the moment of speaking.
e.g. The soup *tastes* delicious.
John *must be* in the attic. I *can hear* his footsteps.
- ◆ some other verbs: *be, contain, fit, include, matter, need, belong, cost, owe, mean, own, appear, want, have (=possess), etc.*
e.g. This book *is mine*. It *belongs* to me.

Some state verbs have continuous tenses, but there is a difference in meaning.

Study the following examples:

- 1) I *think* she's Italian. (=believe)
I'm *thinking about* my holiday.
(=am considering)
- 2) The soup *tastes* awful. (=has an awful flavour)
She's *tasting* the soup. (=is testing the flavour of)
- 3) I *can see* an aeroplane in the sky. (=perceive with my eyes)
I'm *seeing* Jill tonight. (=am meeting)
- 4) Susan *looks* tired. (=appears)
Susan *is looking* at some photos. (=is studying)
- 5) The room *smells* of perfume. (=has the smell)
The cat *is smelling* its food. (=is sniffing)
- 6) This towel *feels* soft. (=has a soft texture)
Jill *is feeling* her son's forehead. (=is touching)
- 7) He *is* selfish. (character – permanent state)
He *is being* selfish. (behaviour – temporary situation)
- 8) He *has* a sports car. (=possesses)
He's *having* lunch now. (=is eating – idiom)

Some idioms with *have* include:

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| have | { | breakfast / lunch / dinner, etc. |
| | | a bath / shower / swim / party, etc. |
| | | a(n) accident / experience / dream, etc. |
| | | a baby |
| | | difficulty / fun / trouble, etc. |

11

Put the verbs in brackets into the present simple or the present continuous.

- 1 A: ...*Do you know*... (you/know) that man over there?
B: Actually, I do. He's Muriel's husband.
- 2 A: Are you doing anything tomorrow evening?
B: Yes. I (see) Jack at nine o'clock.
- 3 A: I (see) you're feeling better.
B: Yes, I am, thank you.
- 4 A: What's that noise?
B: The people next door (have) a party.
- 5 A: Graham (have) a new computer.
B: I know. I've already seen it.
- 6 A: This dress (not/fit) me any more.
B: Why don't you buy a new one?
- 7 A: Your perfume (smell) nice. What is it?
B: It's a new perfume called Sunshine.
- 8 A: What is Jane doing?
B: She (smell) the flowers in the garden.
- 9 A: What (you/look) at?
B: Some photos I took during my holidays. They aren't very good, though.
- 10 A: You (look) very pretty today.
B: Thank you. I've just had my hair cut.
- 11 A: I (think) we're being followed.
B: Don't be silly! It's just your imagination.
- 12 A: Is anything wrong?
B: No. I (just/think) about the party tonight.
- 13 A: This fabric (feel) like silk.
B: It is silk, and it was very expensive.
- 14 A: What are you doing?
B: I (feel) the radiator to see if it's getting warm.
- 15 A: She (be) generous, isn't she?
B: Yes, she has never been a mean person.
- 16 A: He (be) very quiet today, isn't he?
B: Yes, I think he has some problems.
- 17 A: Would you like some cherries?
B: Yes, please. I (love) cherries. They're my favourite fruit.
- 18 A: I'm sorry, but I (not understand) what you mean.
B: Shall I explain it again?
- 19 A: The children are making lots of noise today.
B: I know, but they (have) fun.
- 20 A: This cake (taste) awful.
B: I think I forgot to put the sugar in it!