

Present tenses (I am doing / I do) for the future

A

Present continuous (I am doing) with a future meaning



This is Ben's diary for next week.

He **is playing** tennis on Monday afternoon.

He **is going** to the dentist on Tuesday morning.

He **is having** dinner with Kate on Friday.

In all these examples, Ben has already decided and arranged to do these things.

I'm doing something (tomorrow) = I have already decided and arranged to do it:

- ☐ A: What **are you doing** on Saturday evening? (*not* What do you do)
- ☐ B: **I'm going** to the theatre. (*not* I go)
- ☐ A: What time **is** Katherine **arriving** tomorrow?
- ☐ B: Half past ten. **I'm meeting** her at the station.
- ☐ **I'm not working** tomorrow, so we can go out somewhere.
- ☐ Steve **isn't playing** football next Saturday. He's hurt his leg.

'I'm going to (do)' is also possible in these sentences:

- ☐ What **are you going to do** on Saturday evening?

But the present continuous is more natural when we talk about arrangements. See Unit 20B.

Do not use **will** to talk about what you have arranged to do:

- ☐ What **are you doing** this evening? (*not* What will you do)
- ☐ Alex **is getting** married next month. (*not* will get)

You can also use the present continuous for an action *just before you begin to do it*. This happens especially with verbs of movement (**go/come/leave** etc.):

- ☐ I'm tired. **I'm going** to bed now. Goodnight. (*not* I go to bed now)
- ☐ 'Jess, are you ready yet?' 'Yes, **I'm coming**.' (*not* I come)

B

Present simple (I do) with a future meaning

We use the present simple when we talk about timetables, programmes etc. (for public transport, cinemas etc.):

- ☐ My train **leaves** at 11.30, so I need to be at the station by 11.15.
- ☐ What time **does** the film **start** this evening?
- ☐ It's Wednesday tomorrow. / Tomorrow **is** Wednesday.

You can use the present simple to talk about people if their plans are fixed like a timetable:

- ☐ I **start** my new job on Monday.
- ☐ What time **do** you **finish** work tomorrow?

But the continuous is more usual for personal arrangements:

- ☐ What time **are you meeting** Ann tomorrow? (*not* do you meet)

Compare:

Present continuous

- ☐ What time **are you arriving**?
- ☐ **I'm going** to the cinema this evening.

Present simple

- ☐ What time **does the train arrive**?
- ☐ **The film starts** at 8.15 (this evening).

Exercises

- 19.1** A friend of yours is planning to go on holiday soon. You ask her about her plans. Use the words in brackets to make your questions.



- 1 (where / go?) Where are you going?
- 2 (how long / go for?)
- 3 (when / leave?)
- 4 (go / alone?)
- 5 (travel / by car?)
- 6 (where / stay?)

Scotland.
Ten days.
Next Friday.
No, with a friend.
No, by train.
In a hotel.

- 19.2** Tom wants you to visit him, but you are very busy. Look at your diary for the next few days and explain to him why you can't come.



- TOM: Can you come on Monday evening?
YOU: Sorry, but I'm playing volleyball (1)
TOM: What about Tuesday evening then?
YOU: No, not Tuesday. I (2)
TOM: And Wednesday evening?
YOU: (3)
TOM: Well, are you free on Thursday?
YOU: I'm afraid not. (4)

- 19.3** Have you arranged to do anything at these times? Write sentences about yourself.

- 1 (this evening) I'm going out this evening. or I'm not doing anything this evening.
- 2 (tomorrow morning) I
- 3 (tomorrow evening)
- 4 (next Sunday)
- 5 (choose another day or time)

- 19.4** Put the verb into the more suitable form, present continuous or present simple.

- 1 I'm going (I / go) to the cinema this evening.
- 2 Does the film start (the film / start) at 3.30 or 4.30?
- 3 (we / have) a party next Saturday. Would you like to come?
- 4 The art exhibition (finish) on 3 May.
- 5 (I / not / go) out this evening.
(I / stay) at home.
- 6 '..... (you / do) anything tomorrow morning?' 'No, I'm free. Why?'
- 7 (we / go) to a concert tonight.
(it / start) at 7.30.
- 8 (I / leave) now. I've come to say goodbye.
- 9 A: Have you seen Liz recently?
B: No, but (we / meet) for lunch next week.
- 10 *You are on the train to London and you ask another passenger:*
Excuse me. What time (this train / get) to London?
- 11 *You are talking to Helen:*
Helen, (I / go) to the supermarket. (you / come) with me?
- 12 *You and a friend are watching television. You say:*
I'm bored with this programme. What time (it / end)?
- 13 (I / not / use) the car this evening, so you can have it.
- 14 Sue (come) to see us tomorrow.
(she / travel) by train and her train (arrive) at 10.15.