

progressive vs. non-progressive

Food polemics aside, I'm *NOT* lovin' it! ... Why? Because in good English, you can't use the verb "to love" and many others in the progressive / continuous (-ing) tense when they are being used normally. How can you tell which verbs can be used in the progressive, or not? We'll look at them together in a minute. First, let's see what you think.

1. CLICK ON, DRAG, & DROP these verbs (understood as having their normal meanings) into boxes on the right cart, -ing (progressive) or non-ing (non-progressive). (TRICK: there are too many boxes!)

agree arrive be behave can doubt feel have (auxiliary) have (possession)

hear hold ring run smell suggest watch

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N.B., the drop boxes want their items dropped onto their LEFT sides.



Do this BEFORE going ahead!!!

I'm *NOT* lovin' it! – progressive and non-progressive verbs in English – by S.K. Meyer

There are about 100,000 verbs in English (OK, about 25,000 in common use), and you can't learn all of them one by one, so how **do** you decide which verbs – used with their normal meaning – can be used in the progressive, or not? Learn these categories!

HINT: if you need to express "now" with non-progressive verbs, you can use the present simple, or can + infinitive with no "to."



"HEAD" & "COMMUNICATING" verbs, ex., believe, doubt, realize, recognize, remember, suppose, understand, know, agree, disagree, deny, promise, satisfy, surprise, please, astonish, ...

HEADS UP! We can't use *think* in the progressive when we mean *having an opinion* ("I'm thinking that it's very pretty"), but when we mean *ponder* we can ("I'm thinking about it"). Another exception? *Wonder* ("I'm wondering if we can do it").

Is the sentence correct, grammatically? TICK the right answer.

2. I believe that the earth is flat. The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.
3. I'm thinking it's a good idea. The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.

"HEART" verbs, ex., like, love, hate, prefer, dislike, fear, want, wish, ...

HEADS UP! We can sometimes use *hope* in the progressive, "I'm hoping to see you at the party." We do this for *hope* and **SOME** other non-progressive verbs when we want to be *very* polite (it's called "social distancing"). It's better to be safe, though...use the present simple, "I hope to see you, soon."



CLICK on the pulldown menu, and CHOOSE the correct form (CAREFUL: there's a TRICK in at least ONE of them!):

4. She _____ to go to museums by herself, these days.
5. They _____ to see the Pergamon altar with you this time in Berlin.



STATE OF BEING verbs, ex., be, seem, appear (*in the sense of to seem*), fit, consist, depend, involve, ...

HEADS UP! *Be* can be used IDIOMATICALLY in the PROGRESSIVE, ex., when you are expressing *behavior*, "That screaming child is being so naughty!" *Appear*, too, when it means starring in a movie, or play. ETC. Learn the exceptions one-by-one.

CLICK on the pulldown menu, and CHOOSE the right answer (WATCH OUT! There's a TRICK in at least ONE of them!):

6. Do you want to come with us? – Well, it all _____ on whether it rains, or not.

7. Oh, that noisy rambunctious kid _____ such a nuisance, this afternoon!

You also can't use **POSSESSION verbs** in the progressive, ex., have, own, possess, contain, belong,...

To reinforce the sense of "now" – **ONLY** for *have* for possession – we use the present perfect,

"Yes, I've got a car, today, so I can take you." For all the others, use the present simple or *can*!



CLICK on the pulldown menu, and CHOOSE the correct answer:

8. All my personal belongings _____ in that cupboard while she is here.

9. _____ an appointment at 3 o'clock, today? I need to see you for a few minutes.

DID YOU REMEMBER...that the -ing form can be used in three ways other than as verbs?

NOUN/GERUND: Her hearing is very good. Reading is one of my favorite hobbies. ...

ADJECTIVE: That screaming child is getting on my nerves! The sleeping puppy is so cute! ...

ADVERBIAL/OBJECT CLAUSES (*even for some non-progressive verbs!*): The cupboard containing liquor is there.



Of course, **MODALS** can't be used in the progressive, either. You can't say, "I'm-musting go." *Brrrrrrrr!*

The last category of verbs we CAN'T use in the progressive when they express their normal meanings are the verbs of the **5 SENSES**. It really helps to remember that these are THINGS that STRIKE your senses. You don't do anything to experience them: see, hear, taste, smell, and feel. You just have to be awake and not daydreaming!



SEE: The light strikes your open eyes, your nerves send the signals to your brain, and your brain processes the signals, all without you doing anything.

HEADS UP! The corresponding ACTION verbs CAN be used in the progressive: watch, look (at), study,...

HEADS UP! IDIOMATICALLY, ex., for appointments or experimenting with ability or dating someone, it CAN, "I'm seeing my doctor at 3 PM," "I'm seeing if I can get the stain out of my favorite shirt," "Yes, I'm seeing Pat."

For nn. 10-12, TICK the correct answer:

10. Are you seeing your friend after supper? The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.
11. Just look at that rain...are you seeing it? The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.

HEAR: Sound waves strike your tympanums, the nerves send signals to your brain, and your brain processes the signals. You don't do anything. You aren't even paying particular attention to the sounds.



HEADS UP! The corresponding ACTION verbs CAN be used in the progressive: listen (to),...

HEADS UP! IDIOMATICALLY, ex., for court sessions or for paying attention to rumors, it CAN, "The judge is hearing our case, today," "I've been hearing a lot of rumors about you...what ARE you doing?!"

12. I am hearing the great record I just bought. The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.



FEEL: This verb refers to sensations that come to you through your skin & bodily tissues. Something external (even teeny tiny) to the bodily tissues & skin triggers the nerve cells, which send signals of pain, pleasure, pressure, friction, heat, cold, etc, to the brain, which processes the signals; you don't DO anything, ex., "Oh, that sun feels so good (on my skin)", "Man, this chair feels so hard"; "Wow, this sweater feels rough without a shirt under it."

HEADS UP! Feel and the two remaining sense verbs CAN be used in their NORMAL sense AND in the PROGRESSIVE *IF* you are expressing EXPERIMENTATION, "What are you doing dripping milk on your wrist?!" – "I'm feeling it to see if it's too hot for the baby, what do you think I'm doing, putting it on as perfume?!"

HEADS UP! Feel can be used IDIOMATICALLY in the PROGRESSIVE, ex., for expressing a STATE OF BEING, "I can't come into work, today. I'm not feeling good." (N.B., the adjective *good* refers to the state of being of the speaker; it is not an adverb telling us the manner in which the speaker acted to judge his/her state of being.)

HEADS UP! *Feel like + verb-ing* can be used IDIOMATICALLY to mean *want*, but feel is still NOT used in the progressive, ex., I feel like singing, right now, I'm so happy.

HEADS UP! The corresponding ACTION verbs CAN be used in the progressive: touch, rub, pinch, ...

CLICK on the pulldown menu, and CHOOSE the correct answer:

14. I _____ like going to get an ice cream, it's so hot, today!

TASTE: Something in your mouth triggers the nerve cells to send signals of the five sensations (sweet, sour, bitter, salty, and the earthy umami) to your brain that processes them. You don't DO anything.



HEADS UP! You CAN use taste in its NORMAL sense in the PROGRESSIVE *IF* you are expressing EXPERIMENTATION, "I'm tasting the soup to see if it's too salty." You are talking about the sensations on your tongue, not the things you DID (ex., put the spoon with the soup in your mouth,...) to provoke those sensations.

HEADS UP! For the idiom *to taste blood* (i.e, violent victory), use *can* to emphasize "now," ex., They can taste blood.

For nn. 15-18: TICK the correct answer:

15. *Waiter*: How is your soup? – *You*: It is tasting very good. The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.

16. My mouth tastes a little metallic. Am I sick? The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.



SMELL: I saved this one until last because it's fun; it has two meanings: the sense of smell (we're the "smeller" ©) AND emitting odors (we can even be the "smellee" ©). The "smeller" or the "smellee" doesn't DO anything to provoke the sensations. The nerves and brain do all the work. Ex., "I can smell your dog, and it really smells/stinks!" "I love roses because they smell so good!" "You smell good!"

HEADS UP! As the "smeller," you CAN use *smell* in its NORMAL sense in the PROGRESSIVE *IF* you are expressing EXPERIMENTATION, "I'm smelling the milk to see if it's still good to drink."

HEADS UP! All the idioms with smell as a verb that I've found so far can't be in the progressive.

17. The house smells terrible! What have you been cooking?! The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.

18. I'm smelling the Jones' roses even from my yard. How nice! The grammar is correct. | The grammar is incorrect.

One last **HEADS UP** about **WHEN we use the progressive in the present sense**: to indicates something happening in this period ("My sister is working for a very good company") or something that is happening right now *IF* the other person can't see you (phone call: "What are you doing, right now?" "I'm doing my English homework, and you?"), ***OR*** to express negative surprise (to a child scribbling on a wall with an indelible pen: "What are you doing?!"). The present progressive can also be used for a particular kind of a future tense...but that's a story for another worksheet!

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