

# State verbs and action verbs

## 1 States and actions

### STATES

A state means something staying the same.

*The flat **is** clean.*

*The farmer **owns** the land.*

*The box **contained** old books.*

State verbs cannot usually be continuous.

NOT *The farmer **is owning** the land.*

### ACTIONS

An action means something happening.

*I'm **cleaning** the flat.*

*The farmer **is buying** the land.*

*He **put** the books in the box.*

Action verbs can be simple or continuous.

*He **put** / He **was putting** everything away.*

Some state verbs: be, believe, belong, consist of, contain, depend on, deserve, exist, hate, know, like, love, matter, mean, own, need, prefer, remember, resemble, seem, understand

## 2 I think/I'm thinking etc.

Sometimes we can use a verb either for a state or for an action.

### STATES (simple tenses)

*I **think** you're right. (= believe)*

*We **have** three cars. (= own)*

*I **come** from Sweden. (= live in)*

*I **see** your problem. (= understand)*

*Do you **see** that house? (= have in sight)*

*This picture **looks** nice.*

*She **appears** very nervous. (= seems)*

*The bag **weighed** five kilos.*

*The coat **fits**. (= is the right size)*

### ACTIONS (simple or continuous)

*I'm **thinking** about the problem.*

*We're **having** lunch. (= eating)*

*I'm **coming** from Sweden. (= travelling)*

*I usually **come** on the plane.*

*Mark **is seeing** his boss. (= meeting)*

*I **see** Daniel quite often.*

*I'm **looking** at this picture.*

*She **appeared/was appearing** in a film.*

*They **weighed/were weighing** my bag.*

*I'm **fitting** a lock to the window.*

These examples with the verb **be** are about how people behave.

### PERMANENT QUALITY

*Claire **is** a very sociable person.*

*That man **is** an idiot.*

### TEMPORARY BEHAVIOUR

*Andrew **is being** very sociable today.*

*You **are being** an idiot this morning.*

(= You are behaving like an idiot.)

We use **am/are/is being** only to talk about behaviour, not about other things.

*I'm better now, thanks. **Are** you ready? **Is** anyone interested?*

## 3 I like/I'm liking etc.

We can use some state verbs in the continuous to talk about a short period of time.

### PERMANENT STATE (simple tenses)

*I **love/enjoy** parties.*

*I **like** school.*

*Holidays **cost** a lot of money.*

### SHORT PERIOD (continuous)

*I'm **loving/enjoying** this party.*

*I'm **liking** school much better now.*

*This trip **is costing** me a lot of money.*

Sometimes we can use either the simple or the continuous with no difference in meaning.

*You **look** well. OR You're **looking** well. We **feel** a bit sad. OR We're **feeling** a bit sad.*

# Practice

## A States and actions (1)

Tom is on the Internet. He's telling people about himself.

Say which verbs express states and which express actions.

► I surf the Net most evenings.

action

1 My flat is in the town centre.

2 I drive a taxi in the daytime.

3 I own two cars.

4 I go to lots of parties.

5 I love football.

## B I think/I'm thinking etc. (2)

Complete the conversation. Choose the correct form of the verb.

Emma: Hi, Matthew. What (►) do you look/are you looking at?

Matthew: Oh, hi. These are photos of me when I was a child.

Emma: Oh, look at this one. (1) I think/I'm thinking you look lovely, Matthew.

Matthew: (2) I have/I'm having some more photos here.

Emma: Look at this. Why such a big coat?

Matthew: It was my brother's. That's why (3) it didn't fit/it wasn't fitting properly.

Emma: Oh, (4) I see/I'm seeing. And (5) you have/you're having your tea here. And in this one (6) you think/you're thinking about something very serious.

Matthew: This is a photo of the village (7) I come/I'm coming from.

Emma: Oh, that's nice.

Matthew: And I caught this fish, look. (8) It weighed/It was weighing about half a kilo.

Emma: What a nice little boy! And what a sentimental old thing you are now!

## C The verb be (2)

Put in the correct form of *be*.

► Daniel is doing some of the work. He 's being very helpful at the moment.

► I 'm tired. I want to go home.

1 The children ..... very polite today. They don't usually behave so well.

2 I'm afraid Melanie can't come because she ..... ill.

3 Of course you can understand it. You ..... stupid, that's all.

4 We ..... interested in doing a course here.

5 Vicky ..... very lazy at the moment. She's done no work at all today.

## D I like/I'm liking etc. (3)

Write a sentence which follows on. Choose from these sentences.

*I think it's going to be perfect for me.*

*And I've still got a chance to win.*

*I've never wanted to change it.*

*It uses so much petrol.*

*It's too expensive to buy.*

*I play it every weekend.*

► I enjoy the game. I play it every weekend.

1 I'm enjoying the game.

2 The car costs a lot of money.

3 The car is costing a lot of money.

4 I'm liking my new job.

5 I like my job.