

1 Present simple

+	verb / verb + -s	<i>She works in London.</i>
-	<i>do/does not + verb</i>	<i>He doesn't work in London.</i>
?	<i>do/does ... + verb?</i>	<i>Where do you work?</i>

We use the present simple:

- to say when things happen if they take place regularly:
They eat lunch at two o'clock.

- to talk about permanent situations:
I work in London.
- to state general truths:
Those bags sell really fast.
The moon goes round the earth.
- to talk about habits and how often they happen:
You buy new clothes every Saturday.
- to describe the plots of books and films:
The story begins and ends in Spain. The year is 1937.

2 Present continuous

+	<i>am/is/are + verb + -ing</i>	<i>He's working in London this week.</i>
-	<i>am/is/are not + verb + -ing</i>	<i>I'm not working in London this week.</i>
?	<i>am/is/are ... + verb + -ing?</i>	<i>Are you working in London this week?</i>

We use the present continuous:

- to talk about the present moment:
I'm wearing a pair of old jeans.
I'm looking at a blue bag right now.
- to suggest that an action is temporary, often with words like *now*, *at the moment*, *at present* or *just*:
They're eating lunch at the moment.
I'm working in London this week. (= I don't usually work in London)
- for an action around the time of speaking, which has begun but is not finished:
I'm cleaning my room.
I'm looking round the shops. (Millie isn't looking round at this moment – she has stopped to talk to Lisa – but she plans to continue looking round later.)
- for changing or developing situations:
Navy blue bags are getting really fashionable.
The Earth's temperature is rising.
- with a word like *always* or *continually* if we want to criticise or complain:
You're always buying new clothes! (= you buy too many)
He's always complaining about things.
- with *always* when something unexpected happens several times:
I'm always meeting my neighbour John near the station. I guess he works somewhere near there.

3 State verbs

These verbs are nearly always used in a simple rather than a continuous tense. They are mostly about thoughts, feelings, belonging and the senses:

... that leather bag you want to get (not *you are wanting to*)

You don't deserve to hear it. (not *you aren't deserving to*)

The following are some important state verbs:

- thoughts: *believe, know, mean, realise, recognise, remember, suppose, understand, feel* (= believe), *think* (= believe):
I think you're wrong.
We feel this decision is right.
- feelings: *adore, dislike, despise, hate, like, love, want, wish, prefer*:
They despise me because of the way I'm living.
- belonging: *belong, have* (= possess), *own, possess*:
It belongs to my father.
The manager has the biggest company car.

- senses: *smell, taste, hear, see*:

This sauce tastes great.

I hear what you're saying to me, but I don't agree.

Do you see anything you want to buy here?

We use *can* with these verbs to show we are talking about this moment:

I can see you're tired.

I can hear someone in the next room.

- other state verbs: *need, contain, deserve, fit, seem, look* (= seem), *look like, matter, weigh*:

This medicine contains aspirin.

Mark weighs 70 kilos.

⚠ *Think* is not a state verb when it refers to what someone is doing, not what they believe:

I'm thinking about my holiday.

⚠ *Have* can be continuous when it does not mean 'possess':

Steve is having a difficult time at college this term.

Can I phone you back later? We're having lunch right now.

⚠ *Taste* and *smell* can be continuous when they refer to what someone is doing:

I'm tasting the sauce.

⚠ *Listen to, watch and look at* are not state verbs and can be continuous:

We're listening to music and Diane is watching a DVD upstairs.

⚠ *See* can be continuous when it means 'meet with':

Lara's at the medical centre. She's seeing a doctor about her sore throat.

⚠ *Weigh* can be continuous when it refers to what someone is doing:

The shop assistant is weighing the cheese.

4 The verb to be

The verb *to be* is nearly always used in a simple rather than a continuous tense. When it is continuous it emphasises that a situation is temporary. It often describes a person's behaviour:

You're being so impatient! (Millie doesn't believe that Lisa is normally an impatient person.)

My brother is being very nice to me this week. I wonder what he wants!

Francis is filling in a form online, so we're all being quiet as we don't want him to make any mistakes.

Fill in the gaps with the present simple or present continuous form of the verbs.

Alex: Why are you wearing (you / wear) my coat?

Ben: Oh, I'm sorry. It looks (look) like mine in this light.

Carl: I have (have) no idea what this sentence means (mean).
Can you translate it?

Donna: No, sorry. I don't understand (not understand) it either.

Eddie: Are you seeing (you / see) those men near the door? They are looking (look) at us very strangely.

Fergus: Yes. You're right. Do you recognise (you / recognise) them from anywhere?

Eddie: No, but they certainly seem (seem) to know us. They are coming (come) across to speak to us.

Gina: What are you doing (you / do) in the kitchen? Our guests are waiting (wait) for their dessert, and you are getting (get) in my way!

Hamid: I just want (want) to be somewhere quiet for a while. Everyone is being (be) so noisy this evening! I don't know (not know) why – it's very unusual.

Complete these sentences with the present simple or present continuous form of the verbs.

My father knows (know) all about mending cars, but nothing about bicycles.

This pie smells (smell) a bit odd. What's in it?

I like (like) the jacket of this suit, but unfortunately the trousers don't fit (not fit) me any more.

You're very quiet this evening. What you / think (you / think) about?

Who is (be) that man? Why is (your sister / be) so rude to him?

She has (have) such beautiful manners normally.

4 Complete the email using the present simple or present continuous form of these verbs.

behave come cost eat enjoy feel go have like love pay realise say
seem serve show smile stay take visit

Dear Stephanie,

How are you? We're fine. Our trip round the States (1) is going well and we (2) are having ourselves a lot. One good surprise is that things (3) cost less here than back home. For example, this weekend we (4) were staying in a motel beside a lake and we (5) paid only \$65 per night for a room with a beautiful view.

The only thing we (6) haven't (not) much is the food. Restaurants (7) serve dinner rather early. We (8) never eat (never) at six o'clock at home so we (9) feel (not) hungry then and American portions (10) are very big to us. Apart from that, we (11) are having a wonderful time. We (12) are visiting lots of interesting little towns and we absolutely (13) love the scenery.

People here (14) are in a very friendly manner towards strangers. All the shop assistants (15) smile at us, and everyone (16) says 'Have a nice day!' At home, the TV (17) always shows (always) us bad news stories about the States, but in fact, when you (18) are here, you (19) see it's a really great place.

We (20) have lots of photos to show you.

Much love,

Mick and Mary

