

1 Present simple

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

+	am/is/are + verb + -ing	<i>He's working in London this week.</i>
-	am/is/are not + verb + -ing	<i>I'm not working in London this week.</i>
?	am/is/are ... + verb + -ing?	<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 _____ (look) like mine in this light.

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

Donna: No, sorry. I _____ (not understand) it either.

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

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

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

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

Hamid: I just _____ (want) to be somewhere quiet for a while. Everyone _____ (be)
so noisy this evening! I _____ (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 _____ (smell) a bit odd. What's in it?

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

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

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

She _____ (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) _____ ourselves a lot. One good surprise is that things (3) _____ less here than back home. For example, this weekend we (4) _____ in a motel beside a lake and we (5) _____ only \$65 per night for a room with a beautiful view.

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

People here (14) _____ in a very friendly manner towards strangers. All the shop assistants (15) _____ at us, and everyone (16) _____ 'Have a nice day!'
At home, the TV (17) _____ (always) us bad news stories about the States, but in fact, when you (18) _____ here, you (19) _____ it's a really great place.
We (20) _____ lots of photos to show you.

Much love,

Mick and Mary

