

Present continuous and present simple 1 (I am doing and I do)

Compare:

A

present continuous (I am doing)

We use the continuous for things happening at or around the time of speaking.
The action is not complete.

I am doing		
past	now	future
<input type="checkbox"/> The water is boiling . Be careful. <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to those people. What language are they speaking ? <input type="checkbox"/> Let's go out. It isn't raining now. <input type="checkbox"/> 'I'm busy.' 'What are you doing ?' <input type="checkbox"/> I'm getting hungry. Let's go and eat. <input type="checkbox"/> Kate wants to work in Italy, so she's learning Italian. <input type="checkbox"/> The population of the world is increasing very fast.		

We use the continuous for *temporary* situations (things that continue for a short time):

- I'm **living** with some friends until I find a place of my own.
- A: You're **working** hard today.
B: Yes, I have a lot to do.

See Unit 1 for more information.

present simple (I do)

We use the simple for things in general or things that happen repeatedly.

I do		
past	now	future
<input type="checkbox"/> Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius. <input type="checkbox"/> Excuse me, do you speak English?		

We use the simple for *permanent* situations (things that continue for a long time):

- My parents **live** in London. They have lived there all their lives.
- Joe isn't lazy. He **works** hard most of the time.

See Unit 2 for more information.

B

I always do and I'm always doing

I **always do** something = I do it every time:

- I **always go** to work by car. (not I'm always going)

I'm **always doing** something = I do it too often or more often than normal.

For example:



I'm always losing them = I lose them too often, or more often than normal.

- Paul is never satisfied. He's **always complaining**. (= he complains too much)
- You're **always looking** at your phone. Don't you have anything else to do?

Exercises

3.1 Are the underlined verbs OK? Correct them where necessary.

- 1 Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.
- 2 How often are you going to the cinema?
- 3 Ben tries to find a job, but he hasn't had any luck yet.
- 4 Martina is phoning her mother every day.
- 5 The moon goes round the earth in about 27 days.
- 6 Can you hear those people? What do they talk about?
- 7 What do you do in your spare time?
- 8 Sarah is a vegetarian. She doesn't eat meat.
- 9 I must go now. It gets late.
- 10 'Come on! It's time to leave.' 'OK, I come.'
- 11 Paul is never late. He's always starting work on time.
- 12 They don't get on well. They're always arguing.

OK

do you go

3.2 Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or present simple.

- 1 a I usually get (I / usually / get) hungry in the afternoon.
- b I'm getting (I / get) hungry. Let's go and eat something.
- 2 a '..... (you / listen) to the radio?' 'No, you can turn it off.'
- b '..... (you / listen) to the radio a lot?' 'No, not very often.'
- 3 a The River Nile (flow) into the Mediterranean.
- b The river (flow) very fast today – much faster than usual.
- 4 a I'm not very active. (I / not / do) any sport.
- b What (you / usually / do) at weekends?
- 5 a Rachel is in New York right now. (She / stay) at the Park Hotel.
- b (She / always / stay) there when she's in New York.

3.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or present simple.

- 1 Why are all these people here? What's happening (What / happen)?
- 2 Julia is good at languages. (She / speak) four languages very well.
- 3 Are you ready yet? (Everybody / wait) for you.
- 4 I've never heard this word. How (you / pronounce) it?
- 5 Kate (not / work) this week. She's on holiday.
- 6 I think my English (improve) slowly. It's better than it was.
- 7 Nicola (live) in Manchester. She has never lived anywhere else.
- 8 Can we stop walking soon? (I / start) to get tired.
- 9 Sam and Tina are in Madrid right now. (They / visit) a friend of theirs.
- 10 'What (your father / do)?' 'He's an architect.'
- 11 It took me an hour to get to work this morning. Most days (it / not / take) so long.
- 12 I (I / learn) to drive. My driving test is next month. My father (teach) me.

3.4 Finish B's sentences. Use **always** -ing.

- 1 A: I've lost my keys again.
B: Not again! You're always losing your keys .
- 2 A: The car has broken down again.
B: That car is useless. It .
- 3 A: Look! You've made the same mistake again.
B: Oh no, not again! I .
- 4 A: Oh, I've left my phone at home again.
B: Typical! .

Present continuous and present simple 2 (I am doing and I do)

A

We use continuous forms (I'm waiting, it's raining etc.) for actions and happenings that have started but not finished.

Some verbs (for example, **know** and **like**) are not normally used in this way. We don't say 'I am knowing', 'they are liking'. We say 'I **know**', 'they **like**'.

The following verbs are not normally used in the present continuous:

like	want	need	prefer
know	realise	understand	recognise
believe	suppose	remember	mean
belong	fit	contain	consist
			seem

- I'm hungry. I **want** something to eat. (not I'm wanting)
- Do you understand** what I **mean**?
- Anna **doesn't seem** very happy right now.

B

think

When **think** means 'believe' or 'have an opinion', we do not use the continuous:

- I **think** Mary is Canadian, but I'm not sure. (not I'm thinking)
- What **do you think** of my idea? (= what is your opinion?)

When **think** means 'consider', the continuous is possible:

- I'm **thinking** about what happened. I often **think** about it.
- Nicky **is thinking** of giving up her job. (= she is considering it)

C

see hear smell taste look feel

We normally use the present simple (not continuous) with **see/hear/smell/taste**:

- Do you see** that man over there? (not are you seeing)
- The room **smells**. Let's open a window.
- This soup **doesn't taste** very good.

You can use the present simple or continuous to say how somebody **looks** or **feels** now:

- You **look** well today. or You're **looking** well today.
- How **do you feel** now? or How **are you feeling** now?

but

- I usually **feel** tired in the morning. (not I'm usually feeling)

D

am/is/are being

You can say **he's being ...**, **you're being ...** etc. to say how somebody is behaving *now*:

- I can't understand why **he's being** so selfish. He isn't usually like that.
(**being** selfish = behaving selfishly now)
- 'The path is icy. Don't slip.' 'Don't worry. I'm **being** very careful.'

Compare:

- He never thinks about other people. He's very selfish.
(= he is selfish generally, not only now)
- I don't like to take risks. I'm a very careful person.

We use **am/is/are being** to say how a person is *behaving* (= doing something they can control) now.

It is not usually possible in other situations:

- Sam **is** ill. (not is being ill)
- Are** you tired? (not are you being tired)

Exercises

4.1 Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or present simple.

- Are you hungry? Do you want (you / want) something to eat?
- Alan says he's 90 years old, but nobody (believe) him.
- She told me her name, but (I / not / remember) it now.
- Don't put the dictionary away. (I / use) it.
- Don't put the dictionary away. (I / need) it.
- Air (consist) mainly of nitrogen and oxygen.
- Who is that man? What (he / want)?
- Who is that man? Why (he / look) at us?
- Who is that man? (you / recognise) him?
- (I / think) of selling my car. Would you be interested in buying it?
- I can't make up my mind. What (you / think) I should do?
- Gary wasn't well earlier, but (he / seem) OK now.

4.2 Use the words in brackets to make sentences.

1 (you / not / seem / very happy today)
You don't seem very happy today.

2 Are you OK?
You look worried.
(I / think)

3 (who / this umbrella / belong to?)
I've no idea.

4 (this / smell / good)

5 Excuse me. (anybody / sit / there?)
No, it's free.

6 (these gloves / not / fit / me)
They're too small.

4.3 Are the underlined verbs OK? Correct them where necessary.

- Nicky is thinking of giving up her job.
- It's not true. I'm not believing it.
- I'm feeling hungry. Is there anything to eat?
- I've never eaten that fruit. What is it tasting like?
- I'm not sure what she does. I think she works in a shop.
- Look over there. What are you seeing?
- You're very quiet. What are you thinking about?

OK

I don't believe it.

4.4 Complete the sentences. Use **is/are being** (continuous) or **is/are** (simple).

- I can't understand why he's being so selfish. He isn't usually like that.
- You'll like Sophie when you meet her. She very nice.
- Sarah very nice to me at the moment. I wonder why.
- They very happy. They've just got married.
- You're normally very patient, so why so unreasonable about waiting ten more minutes?
- Would you like something to eat? hungry?

A Study this example:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart **was** an Austrian musician and composer. He **lived** from 1756 to 1791. He **started** composing at the age of five and **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music. He **was** only 35 years old when he **died**.

lived/started/wrote/was/died are all *past simple*

W.A. Mozart



1756-1791

B Very often the past simple ends in **-ed** (regular verbs):

- I work in a travel agency now. Before that I **worked** in a department store.
- They **invited** us to their party, but we **decided** not to go.
- The police **stopped** me on my way home last night.
- Laura **passed** her exam because she **studied** very hard.

For spelling (stopped, studied etc.), see Appendix 6.

But many verbs are *irregular*. The past simple does *not* end in **-ed**. For example:

write → wrote	<input type="checkbox"/> Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music.
see → saw	<input type="checkbox"/> We saw Alice in town a few days ago.
go → went	<input type="checkbox"/> I went to the cinema three times last week.
shut → shut	<input type="checkbox"/> It was cold, so I shut the window.

For a list of irregular verbs, see Appendix 1.

C In questions and negative sentences we use **did/didn't + infinitive** (**enjoy/see/go** etc.):

I she they	enjoyed	did	you she they	enjoy?	I she they	didn't	enjoy
	saw			see?			
	went			go?			

- I enjoyed the party a lot. **Did** you **enjoy** it?
- How many people **did** they **invite** to the wedding?
- I **didn't buy** anything because I **didn't have** any money.
- 'Did you **go** out?' 'No, I **didn't**.'

Sometimes **do** is the main verb in the sentence (did you **do**?, I didn't **do**):

- What **did** you **do** at the weekend? (*not* What did you at the weekend?)
- I **didn't do** anything. (*not* I didn't anything)

D The past of **be** (am/is/are) is **was/were**:

I/he/she/it	was/wasn't	was	I/he/she/it?
we/you/they	were/weren't	were	we/you/they?

- I **was** annoyed because **they were** late.
- Was** the **weather** good when **you were** on holiday?
- They weren't** able to come because **they were** so busy.
- I **wasn't** hungry, so I didn't eat anything.
- Did you go out last night or **were you** too tired?

Exercises

5.1 Read what Laura says about a typical working day:



I usually get up at 7 o'clock and have a big breakfast. I walk to work, which takes me about half an hour. I start work at 8.45. I never have lunch. I finish work at 5 o'clock. I'm always tired when I get home. I usually cook a meal in the evening. I don't usually go out. I go to bed at about 11 o'clock, and I always sleep well.

Yesterday was a typical working day for Laura. Write what she did or didn't do yesterday.

1 She got up	at 7 o'clock.	7	at 5 o'clock.
2 She	a big breakfast.	8	tired when
3 She		9	home.
4 It	to get to work.	10	a meal yesterday evening.
5	at 8.45.	11	out yesterday evening.
6	lunch.	12	at 11 o'clock.
			well last night.

5.2 Complete the sentences using the following verbs in the correct form:

buy catch cost fall hurt sell spend teach throw write

- 1 Mozart wrote more than 600 pieces of music.
- 2 'How did you learn to drive?' 'My father taught me.'
- 3 We couldn't afford to keep our car, so we sold it.
- 4 Dave fell down the stairs this morning and hurt his leg.
- 5 Joe threw the ball to Sue, who caught it.
- 6 Kate spent a lot of money yesterday. She bought a dress which cost £100.

5.3 You ask James about his holiday in the US. Write your questions.

- 1 YOU: Where did you go?
- 2 JAMES: To the US. We went on a trip from San Francisco to Denver.
- 3 YOU: How did you travel? By car?
- 4 JAMES: Yes, we hired a car in San Francisco.
- 5 YOU: It's a long way to drive. How long is it?
- 6 JAMES: Two weeks. We stopped at a lot of places along the way.
- 7 YOU: Where did you stay? In hotels?
- 8 JAMES: Yes, small hotels or motels.
- 9 YOU: Was the weather good?
- 10 JAMES: Yes, but it was very hot – sometimes too hot.
- 11 YOU: Did you visit the Grand Canyon?
- 12 JAMES: Of course. It was wonderful.

5.4 Complete the sentences. Put the verb into the correct form, positive or negative.

- 1 It was warm, so I took off my coat. (take)
- 2 The film wasn't very good. I didn't enjoy it much. (enjoy)
- 3 I knew Sarah was busy, so I disturbed her. (disturb)
- 4 We were very tired, so we left the party early. (leave)
- 5 It was hard carrying the bags. They were really heavy. (be)
- 6 The bed was very uncomfortable. I slept well. (sleep)
- 7 This watch wasn't expensive. It cost much. (cost)
- 8 The window was open and a bird flew into the room. (fly)
- 9 I was in a hurry, so I had time to call you. (have)
- 10 I didn't like the hotel. The room wasn't very clean. (be)