

State Verbs

State Verbs are verbs which describe a state rather than an action and therefore do not normally have continuous tenses. These include:

- verbs which express likes and dislikes: *like, love, dislike, hate, enjoy, prefer, adore*, etc. e.g. *I love chocolate ice cream.*
- verbs of the senses: *see, hear, smell, taste, feel, look, sound*. We often use *can* or *could* with these verbs when we refer to what we see, hear, etc. at the moment of speaking. e.g. *Jim must be at home. I can see his car parked outside.*
- verbs of perception: *know, believe, understand, realise, remember, forget, notice, recognise, think, seem, see* (=understand), *expect* (=think), etc. e.g. *I expect they will be late.*
- some other verbs such as *be, contain, include, belong, fit, need, matter, cost, mean, own, want, owe, have* (=possess), *require, weigh, wish, keep* (=continue), etc. e.g. *My uncle owns a hotel.*

Some of the above verbs are used in continuous tenses when they describe actions and not states. Study the following examples:

- I think** he's lying. (= believe)
I'm thinking about the plan. (= am considering)
- The food **tastes** delicious. (= has a delicious flavour)
He is tasting the food. (= is testing the flavour of)
- I can **see** some people. (= perceive with my eyes)
I see what you mean. (= understand)
I'm seeing my doctor tomorrow. (= am meeting)
- It **looks** as if they've finished the job. (= appears)
Mike is looking out of the window. (is directing his eyes)

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Put the verbs in brackets into the present simple or the present continuous.

- A: Why ...**are you smelling**... (you/smell) the soap?
B: It (smell) lovely. It's like roses!
- A: Why (you/taste) the soup?
B: To see if it (taste) good. I think it needs more salt.
- A: I (feel) very tired.
B: You should go to bed early.
- A: I (see) Andy this evening.
B: I (see). So, you don't want to come to the cinema with me, do you?
- A: How much (the bag of apples/weigh)?
B: I don't know yet. The man (weigh) the bag now.
- A: I (think) about buying a new car soon.
B: Why? I (think) your car is fine. You don't need a new one.
- A: What (you/look) at?
B: The sky. It (look) as if it's going to rain.

- This perfume **smells** nice. (= has a nice smell)
He is smelling the milk. (= is sniffing)
- The baby's hair **feels** like silk. (= has the texture of)
She is feeling the baby's forehead. (= is touching)
- Bob **has** a Porsche. (= possesses)
He's having a shower at the moment. (= is taking a shower)
- The chicken **weighs** 2 kilos. (= has a weight of)
The butcher **is weighing** the meat. (= is measuring how heavy it is)
- This dress **fits** you perfectly. (= it is the right size)
We **are fitting** new locks. (= are putting in)
- He **appears** to be nervous. (= seems)
He is appearing in a new play. (= is taking part)
- He **is** a rude person. (= character - permanent state)
He **is being** rude. (= behaviour - temporary situation, usually with adjectives such as *careful, silly, (im)polite, lazy*, etc.)

Note: a) The verb *enjoy* can be used in continuous tenses to express specific preference.
e.g. *I'm enjoying this party a lot.* (specific preference)

BUT: *I enjoy* going to parties. (*I enjoy parties in general.*)

- b) The verbs *look* (when we refer to a person's appearance), *feel* (= experience a particular emotion), *hurt* and *ache* can be used in either the continuous or simple tenses with no difference in meaning.
e.g. *You look/are looking great today.*

- A: I really (enjoy) home-made food.
B: So do I, and I (enjoy) every bit of this meal.
- A: Why (you/feel) the radiator?
B: It (feel) cold in here. Is the heating on?
- A: That famous opera singer (appear) at the opera house tonight.
B: Yes. He (appear) to be feeling better after his operation.
- A: Chris (be) a sensible person, isn't he?
B: Yes, but in this case he (be) rather foolish.
- A: My dad (fit) the old blind from the living room in my bedroom today.
B: Really? (it/fit) that window?
- A: My back (hurt).
B: Why don't you lie down for a while?