

# Present Tenses

Simple v Continuous

# Overview

The most common ways of expressing present time in English.

The Present Simple – describes things which are generally true

The Present Continuous – describes things which are true at the time of speaking (but may change)

# The Present Simple

The forms of the PS verb only changes after: he she, it – when we add – s to the base form [-es, after, o, s, sh, ch, x; -ies when the base form ends in –y]

I read – he reads; I watch – she watches; I cry – he cries

The negative [-] and questions [?] are formed with the auxiliary DO

DO is used for all persons except for 3<sup>rd</sup> person sg; In that case we must use DOES; With does we must use the infinitive!

Does he always leave this early?

Do you really need to shout?

# Use

## **1. General truths and facts (to state truths and describe things which we FEEL are facts/permanent situations, things which are generally true)**

The British drink a lot of tea.

A broken arm in adults doesn't heal as fast as in kids.

Birds fly south in the winter

## **2. Repeated events/actions (to describe things which happen on a regular basis)**

My family takes summers holidays in Spain or France.

-with adverbs of frequency (always, usually, often, sometimes, never)

-with expressions of frequency (every...once a...)

Every year we camp at the same campsite.

## **3. Series of events/actions (to give directions/instructions)**

In this exercise you have to answer several questions.

- when we want to express the immediacy of an event)

He opens the door, stumbles over a cat, knocks down a table and lands on all fours.

## **4. Newspaperer headlines, speeches, to talk about fixed events in the future**

The trains leaves at 5 o'clock.

# Present Continuous

**Form: We use the present of the verb BE and the present participle (verb+ing) of the main verb:**

I am reading a book.

We, you, they are reading a book.

He, she is reading a book.

It is raining.

**In questions we need to swap the places of the auxiliary verb and the subject.**

Is it raining? Is she reading a book? Are you planning on leaving me?

**Spelling: Note the following spelling rules for forming the present participle:**

Base form+ing: watch-watching

Base form ending in –e+ing: take-taking

Base form+consonant+ing: swim-swimming, run-running

# Use

## **1. Things which are true now:**

The present continuous describes an action in progress at the moment of speaking, which is likely to continue after the speaking. (sth. temporary)

I am finishing my homework right now, so I can't go out with you yet.

Common adverbs: now, just, still, at the moment

**Verbs: LIVE, WORK, STUDY, STAY are used in the continuous if the action is temporary.**

I am staying at my parents' while apartment is being redecorated.

Exception: Here comes/there goes

Here comes the new manager! To you tables people!!!!

## **PC is used to describe things which are changing:**

British summers are getting hotter and hotter and winters are getting wetter.  
Every day in every way we are making better and better.

## **2. Repeated events**

PC can be used to talk about repeated events/actions (if they happen within a temporary period)

I'm feeding the neighbour's dog while she's away.

Repeated actions in a temporary period versus repeated actions over a longer period.  
I work out twice a week, but as summer is getting closer I am working out four times a week.

**We use PC with adverbs: always, forever, continually, to talk about repeated actions that happen often, perhaps too often as far as speaker is concerned:**

You are forever slamming doors and making noise. What's the matter with you?

I am always forgetting people's birthdays. It's annoying!

## Verbs rarely used in the continuous

### **The most common verbs are:**

1. Verbs of existing or being: be, consist of, contain, exist
2. Verbs of possessing: belong to, have (=own), lack, own, possess
3. Verbs of feeling and wanting: adore, desire, despise, detest, dislike, envy, hate, like, love, need, pity, prefer, trust, want, wish
4. Verbs of thinking and believing: believe, doubt, feel (=think), forget, imagine, intent, know, realise, recognise, remember, see (=understand), suppose, think, understand
5. Verbs of appearance: appear, resemble, seem
6. Other verbs: concern, depend, deserve, fit, matter, measure, mean, mind weigh

## Using these verbs in the continuous:

**Many of the verbs can be used in the continuous, but the verb either has a different meaning or expresses a temporary action.**

He's still having a shower. He won't be able to leave in the next 15 mins.  
We are thinking of buying a larger house.

**Some verbs of feeling can be used in both the simple and the continuous with no change in the meaning:**

My wrist hurts/is hurting again. How do you feel today? How are you feeling?

Continuous is usually not used with the verbs describing a sense or a form of perception: hear, notice, see, smell, taste.

**BUT**

I taste cream in this. (involuntary action) I am tasting cream in this. (intentionally, maybe it's off)