

4 Present Continuous

1 Introduction

The Present Continuous means that we are in the middle of an action.

Mark? I'm at the station.
I'm **waiting** for the train.
Oh, I can hear it.
It's **coming** now.

SARAH'S TRAIN IS LATE, SO SHE IS PHONING MARK.



2 Form

The Present Continuous is the present tense of be + an -ing form.

POSITIVE

I am looking OR *I'm looking*

You/we/they are looking OR *You/we/they're looking*

He/she/it is looking OR *He/she/it's looking*

NEGATIVE

I'm not looking

you/we/they aren't looking OR *you're/we're/they're not looking*

he/she/it isn't looking OR *he's/she's/it's not looking*

QUESTION

am I looking?

are you/we/they looking?

is he/she/it looking?

I'm getting the lunch ready.

We're looking for a post office.

What *are you doing*?

The train *is coming*, look.

Rachel *isn't wearing* her new dress.

Who *is Vicky dancing* with?

For rules about the spelling of the -ing form see page 370.

3 Use

We use the Present Continuous to say that we are in the middle of an action.

I'm waiting for the train. (I'm at the station now.)

I'm getting the lunch ready. (I'm in the kitchen now.)

I'm waiting means that I am in the middle of a period of waiting. The wait is not yet over.

We can also use the Present Continuous when we are in the middle of something but not actually doing it at the moment of speaking.

I must get back to the office. We're working on a new project.

I'm quite busy these days. I'm doing a course at college.

We can use the Present Continuous when things are changing over a long period.

The number of cars on the road is increasing. *The earth is slowly getting* warmer.

For the future meaning of the Present Continuous see Unit 26.1.

I'm playing badminton with Matthew *tomorrow*.

▷ 6 Present Continuous or Simple? ▷ 7 State verbs and action verbs

Practice

A Form (2)

Look at the pictures and say what people are doing.

Use these verbs: *carry, paint, play, ride, take*

Use these objects: *a bicycle, a parcel, a photo, a picture, basketball*



▶ He's riding a bicycle.

1 3
2 4

B Form (2)

Rachel is in the computer room at college. Complete her conversation with Andrew.
Put in a Present Continuous form of the verb.

Andrew: What (▶) *are you doing?* (you / do)

Rachel: (▶) *I'm writing* (I / write) a letter to a friend. He's a disc jockey. Vicky and I
(1) (try) to organize a disco.

Andrew: That sounds a lot of work. How (2) (you / find) time for your studies?

Rachel: Well, as I said, Vicky (3) (help) me.

(4) (we / get) on all right. (5)
(we / not / spend) too much time on it. (6) (it / not / take) me
away from my studies, don't worry about that. Oh, sorry, (7)
(you / wait) for this computer?

Andrew: Yes, but there's no hurry.

Rachel: (8) (I / correct) the last bit of the letter. I've nearly finished.

C Use (3)

What can you say in these situations? Add a sentence with the Present Continuous.

▶ A friend rings you up in the middle of *Neighbours*, your favourite soap opera.
Is it important? *I'm watching 'Neighbours'.*

- A friend is at your flat and suggests going out, but you can see rain outside.
I don't want to go out now. Look,
- A friend rings you up at work.
Sorry, I can't talk now.
- You want to get off the bus, but the man next to you is sitting on your coat.
Excuse me,
- A friend wants to talk to you, but you have just started to write an important letter.
Can I talk to you later?
- You have been ill, but you're better now than you were.
I'm OK now.

5 Present Simple



1 Use

We use the Present Simple for

- ▶ thoughts and feelings: *I **think** so, I **like** it.*
- ▶ states, things staying the same, facts and things that are true for a long time:
*We **live** quite near* (see Unit 7).
- ▶ repeated actions: *We **come** here every week.*

and also

- ▶ in phrases like I promise, I agree, etc:
*I **promise** I'll pay you back.*
- ▶ in a negative question with why to make a suggestion: *Why **don't** we go out?*

For the future meaning of the Present Simple see Units 26 and 27.

*The new term **starts** next week.*

2 Positive forms

I/you/we/they **get**
he/she/it **gets**

In the Present Simple we use the verb without an ending.

*I **get** the lunch ready at one o'clock, usually. We always **do** our shopping at Greenway.*
*Most children **like** ice-cream. You **know** the answer.*

But in the third person singular (after he, she, it, your friend, etc), the verb ends in -s or -es. For spelling rules see page 370.

*It **gets** busy at weekends. My husband **thinks** so, too.*
*Sarah **catches** the early train. She **faxes** messages all over the world.*

3 Negatives and questions

NEGATIVE

I/you/we/they **do not get** OR **don't get**
he/she/it **does not get** OR **doesn't get**

QUESTION

do I/we/you/they **get**?
does he/she/it **get**?

We use a form of do in negatives and questions (but see Unit 37). We use do and don't except in the third person singular, where we use does and doesn't.

*We **don't live** far away. He **doesn't want** to go shopping.*
***Do** you **live** here? ~ Yes, I do. What **does** he **want**? ~ Money.*

We do not add -s to the verb in negatives and questions.

NOT *He **doesn't gets*** and NOT *Does **he gets**?*

▷ 6 Present Continuous or Present Simple? ▷ 7 State verbs and action verbs

Practice

A Use (1)

Look at each underlined verb and say what kind of meaning it expresses. Is it a thought, a feeling, a fact or a repeated action?

- ▶ Matthew loves sport. a feeling
- ▶ Sarah often works late at the office. a repeated action
- 1 I hate quiz programmes.
- 2 We play table tennis every Thursday.
- 3 The computer belongs to Emma.
- 4 These plates cost £20 each.
- 5 I believe it's the right thing to do.
- 6 I'm hungry. I want something to eat.
- 7 I usually go to work by bus.
- 8 It's OK. I understand your problem.

B Forms (2–3)

Complete the sentences by putting in the verbs. Use the Present Simple. You have to decide if the verb is positive or negative.

- ▶ Claire is very sociable. She knows (know) lots of people.
- ▶ We've got plenty of chairs, thanks. We don't want (want) any more.
- 1 My friend is finding life in Paris a bit difficult. He (speak) French.
- 2 Most students live quite close to the college, so they (walk) there.
- 3 My sports kit is really muddy. This shirt (need) a good wash.
- 4 I've got four cats and two dogs. I (love) animals.
- 5 No breakfast for Mark, thanks. He (eat) breakfast.
- 6 What's the matter? You (look) very happy.
- 7 Don't try to ring the bell. It (work).
- 8 I hate telephone answering machines. I just (like) talking to them.
- 9 Matthew is good at badminton. He (win) every game.
- 10 We always travel by bus. We (own) a car.

C Forms (2–3)

Complete the conversation. Put in the Present Simple forms.

Rita: ▶ Do you like (you / like) football, Tom?

Tom: ▶ I love (I / love) it. I'm a United fan. (1) (I / go) to all their games. Nick usually (2) (come) with me. And (3) (we / travel) to away games, too. Why (4) (you / not / come) to a match some time?

Rita: I'm afraid football (5) (not / make) sense to me — men running after a ball. Why (6) (you / take) it so seriously?

Tom: It's a wonderful game. (7) (I / love) it. United are my whole life.

Rita: How much (8) (it / cost) to buy the tickets and pay for the travel?

Tom: A lot. (9) (I / not / know) exactly how much. But

(10) (that / not / matter) to me.

(11) (I / not / want) to do anything else.

(12) (that / annoy) you?

Rita: No, (13) (it / not / annoy) me.

I just (14) (find) it a bit sad.

6 Present Continuous or Present Simple?

1 Now or sometimes?



KITTY BEAMISH IS A TV REPORTER.



KITTY IS ON GUY'S CHAT SHOW.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

We use the Present Continuous for something happening now. *I am speaking to you live* means that Kitty is in the middle of a live broadcast.

Here are some more examples.

It's raining at the moment.

I'm watching this programme.

Look. That man is taking a photo of you.

PRESENT SIMPLE

We use the Present Simple for repeated actions. *I often speak live to the camera* means that she does it again and again.

It always rains at the weekend.

I watch television most weekends.

He's a photographer. He takes lots of photos.

2 Thoughts, feelings and states

We normally use the Present Simple to talk about thoughts and feelings.

I think it's a good programme.

Kitty likes her job.

We also use it to talk about states (see Unit 7) and permanent facts.

Reporting means a lot to her.

Paper burns easily.

We also use the Present Simple in **I promise, I agree, I refuse**, etc.

I promise I'll write to you.

It's all right. I forgive you.

3 Temporary or permanent?

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

We use the Present Continuous for a routine or situation that we see as temporary (for a short period).

I'm working at a sports shop for six weeks.

At the moment they're living in a very small flat.

PRESENT SIMPLE

We use the Present Simple for a routine or situation that we see as permanent.

I work at a sports shop. It's a permanent job.

They live in a very nice flat.

4 Always

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

We can use **always** with the Present Continuous to mean 'very often', usually with the added meaning of 'too often'.

Tom is always inviting friends here.

(= He invites them very often.)

I'm always making silly mistakes.

(= I make silly mistakes too often.)

PRESENT SIMPLE

Always with the Present Simple means 'every time'.

Tom always invites us to stay at Christmas.

(= He invites us every Christmas.)

I always make silly mistakes in exams.

(= I make mistakes in every exam.)

Practice

A Present Continuous or Present Simple? (1–2)

At work Mark is talking to Alan in the corridor. Complete their conversation.

Put in the Present Continuous or Present Simple of the verbs.

Mark: ▶ *Are you looking* (you / look) for someone?

Alan: Yes, ▶ *I need* (I / need) to speak to Neil. He isn't in his office.

Mark: (1) (he / talk) to the boss at the moment.

(2) (I / think)

(3) (they / discuss) money.

Alan: Oh, right. And what about you? (4) (you / look) for someone too?

Mark: Yes, Linda. (5) (you / know) where she is?

Alan: Oh, she isn't here today. She only (6) (work) four days a week.

(7) (she / not / work) on Fridays. She'll be here on Monday.

Mark: Thank you. (8) (you / know) a lot about Linda.

Alan: Well, most days (9) (I / give) her a lift, or

(10) (she / give) me one. (11)

(she / live) quite close to me. (12) (it / save) petrol.

Mark: Yes, of course. Good idea. Yes, (13) (I / agree). Well,

(14) (I / waste) my time here then. I'll get back to my computer.

B Present Continuous or Present Simple? (1–3)

Complete the sentences. Put in the Present Continuous or Present Simple of the verbs.

▶ *I'm writing* (I / write) to my parents. *I write* (I / write) to them every weekend.

1 (it / snow) outside. (it / come) down quite hard, look.

2 Normally (I / start) work at eight o'clock, but (I / start) at seven this week. We're very busy at the moment.

3 I haven't got a car at the moment, so (I / go) to work on the bus this week. Usually (I / drive) to work.

4 The sun (rise) in the east, remember. It's behind us so (we / travel) west.

5 I'm afraid I have no time to help just now. (I / write) a report. But (I / promise) I'll give you some help later.

6 (I / want) a new car. (I / save) up to buy one.

C Always (4)

Complete the sentences. Use *always* and the Present Continuous or Present Simple.

▶ Melanie: Tom talks too much, doesn't he?

Rita: Yes, and *he's always talking* about football.

▶ Laura: You forget your keys every time.

Trevor: I try to remember them, but *I always forget*

1 Claire: Sarah takes the train every day, doesn't she?

Mark: Yes, the train.

2 Vicky: Rachel misses lectures much too often in my opinion.

Emma: I agree. lectures.

3 Mike: Every time I drive along here, I go the wrong way.

Harriet: But it's very simple, isn't it? Why the wrong way?

4 David: Trevor and Laura argue much too often, I think.

Melanie: I know.

7 State verbs and action verbs

1 States and actions

STATES

A state means something staying the same.

*The flat **is** clean.*

*The farmer **owns** the land.*

*The box **contained** old books.*

State verbs cannot usually be continuous.

NOT *The farmer ~~is owning~~ the land.*

ACTIONS

An action means something happening.

*I'm **cleaning** the flat.*

*The farmer **is buying** the land.*

*He **put** the books in the box.*

Action verbs can be simple or continuous.

*He **put** / He **was putting** everything away.*

Some state verbs: be, believe, belong, consist of, contain, depend on, deserve, exist, hate, know, like, love, matter, mean, own, need, prefer, remember, resemble, seem, understand

2 I think/I'm thinking etc.

Sometimes we can use a verb either for a state or for an action.

STATES (simple tenses)

*I **think** you're right. (= believe)*

*We **have** three cars. (= own)*

*I **come** from Sweden. (= live in)*

*I **see** your problem. (= understand)*

*Do you **see** that house? (= have in sight)*

*This picture **looks** nice.*

*She **appears** very nervous. (= seems)*

*The bag **weighed** five kilos.*

*The coat **fits**. (= is the right size)*

ACTIONS (simple or continuous)

*I'm **thinking** about the problem.*

*We're **having** lunch. (= eating)*

*I'm **coming** from Sweden. (= travelling)*

*I usually **come** on the plane.*

*Mark **is seeing** his boss. (= meeting)*

*I **see** Daniel quite often.*

*I'm **looking** at this picture.*

*She **appeared/was appearing** in a film.*

*They **weighed/were weighing** my bag.*

*I'm **fitting** a lock to the window.*

These examples with the verb **be** are about how people behave.

PERMANENT QUALITY

*Claire **is** a very sociable person.*

*That man **is** an idiot.*

TEMPORARY BEHAVIOUR

*Andrew **is being** very sociable today.*

*You **are being** an idiot this morning.*

(= You are behaving like an idiot.)

We use **am/are/is being** only to talk about behaviour, not about other things.

*I'm better now, thanks. **Are** you ready? **Is** anyone interested?*

3 I like/I'm liking etc.

We can use some state verbs in the continuous to talk about a short period of time.

PERMANENT STATE (simple tenses)

*I **love/enjoy** parties.*

*I **like** school.*

*Holidays **cost** a lot of money.*

SHORT PERIOD (continuous)

*I'm **loving/enjoying** this party.*

*I'm **liking** school much better now.*

*This trip **is costing** me a lot of money.*

Sometimes we can use either the simple or the continuous with no difference in meaning.

*You **look** well. OR You're **looking** well. We **feel** a bit sad. OR We're **feeling** a bit sad.*

Practice

A States and actions (1)

Tom is on the Internet. He's telling people about himself.
Say which verbs express states and which express actions.

- ▶ I surf the Net most evenings. action
- 1 My flat is in the town centre.
- 2 I drive a taxi in the daytime.
- 3 I own two cars.
- 4 I go to lots of parties.
- 5 I love football.

B I think/I'm thinking etc. (2)

Complete the conversation. Choose the correct form of the verb.

- Emma: Hi, Matthew. What (▶) do you look/are you looking at?
Matthew: Oh, hi. These are photos of me when I was a child.
Emma: Oh, look at this one. (1) I think/I'm thinking you look lovely, Matthew.
Matthew: (2) I have/I'm having some more photos here.
Emma: Look at this. Why such a big coat?
Matthew: It was my brother's. That's why (3) it didn't fit/it wasn't fitting properly.
Emma: Oh, (4) I see/I'm seeing. And (5) you have/you're having your tea here. And in this one (6) you think/you're thinking about something very serious.
Matthew: This is a photo of the village (7) I come/I'm coming from.
Emma: Oh, that's nice.
Matthew: And I caught this fish, look. (8) It weighed/It was weighing about half a kilo.
Emma: What a nice little boy! And what a sentimental old thing you are now!

C The verb be (2)

Put in the correct form of *be*.

- ▶ Daniel is doing some of the work. He 's being very helpful at the moment.
- ▶ I'm tired. I want to go home.
- 1 The children very polite today. They don't usually behave so well.
- 2 I'm afraid Melanie can't come because she ill.
- 3 Of course you can understand it. You stupid, that's all.
- 4 We interested in doing a course here.
- 5 Vicky very lazy at the moment. She's done no work at all today.

D I like/I'm liking etc. (3)

Write a sentence which follows on. Choose from these sentences.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <i>I think it's going to be perfect for me.</i> | <i>And I've still got a chance to win.</i> |
| <i>I've never wanted to change it.</i> | <i>It uses so much petrol.</i> |
| <i>It's too expensive to buy.</i> | <i><u>I play it every weekend.</u></i> |

- ▶ I enjoy the game. I play it every weekend.
- 1 I'm enjoying the game.
- 2 The car costs a lot of money.
- 3 The car is costing a lot of money.
- 4 I'm liking my new job.
- 5 I like my job.