

## Explanations

### Present simple

- Facts which are always true  
The present simple is used to describe permanent facts, for example in science and geographical descriptions.  
*The light from the Sun **takes** 8 mins 20 secs to reach the Earth.*  
*The River Po **flows** into the Adriatic Sea.*  
The present simple is also used for situations that are generally true.  
*I **work** in an office and **live** in a flat in the suburbs.*
- Habitual actions  
The present simple is used to describe habits and routines. A frequency adverb is often used.  
*I usually **take** the bus to work.*
- Summary of events  
The present simple can be used to make a summary of the events in a narrative, for example in a film or book. It can also be used for a table of historical events.  
*In Chapter 1, Susan **meets** David, and **agrees** to go to the school dance with him.*  
*In 1789 the French Revolution **begins**.*

### Present continuous

- Actions which are in progress now  
The present continuous is used to describe actions which are temporary and not yet finished.  
*I'm **doing** the washing-up.*  
The action may be happening right now, or around now.  
*I'm **reading** one of the Harry Potter books at the moment.*
- Habits during a temporary situation  
The present continuous can describe a habit that happens over a short period of time. A time expression is necessary.  
*At the moment we're **sending** all the mail by courier, because the Post Office is on strike.*
- A repeated temporary action  
The present continuous can describe a single action that is repeated. A time expression is necessary.  
*Whenever I see Tom he's **smoking**.*  
*You're **making** the same mistake again!*  
In examples like this we are often exaggerating or complaining. This is particularly true when we use *always*.  
*You're **always borrowing** money from me!*

### Problems with simple and continuous

- Some verbs are not normally used in the continuous form, because they describe activities which already extend in time. These are called 'state' verbs.  
*be, believe, cost, depend, have, hear, know, matter, smell, suppose, taste, think, understand*
- Some of these verbs can be used in continuous forms with a change of meaning.  
*Tim is **being** rather difficult at the moment.* (behave)  
*I'm **having** breakfast.* (eat)  
*I'm **tasting** the soup, to check if it needs more salt.* (sample)  
*I'm **thinking** of buying a new car.* (consider)
- In many situations we can use either a simple or continuous form. The simple form is for a permanent situation or general habit, the continuous form is for a temporary situation.  
*I **live** in London.* (it's my permanent home)  
*I'm **living** in London.* (just for a year – my home is in Athens)  
*Do you **sleep** a lot?* (Is it your habit?)  
*Are you **sleeping** enough?* (What is happening at the moment?)

Practice

1 Underline the most suitable verb form in each sentence.

- a) What sort of work do you do/are you doing?
- b) I can't talk now. I cook/I'm cooking the dinner.
- c) What shall we have? Do you like/Are you liking fish?
- d) Can I borrow this typewriter? Or do you use/are you using it?
- e) What do the people here do/are the people here doing in the evenings?
- f) Follow that bus. Then you turn/are turning left.
- g) A lot of people think that the Sun goes/is going around the Earth.
- h) Excuse me, do you read/are you reading your newspaper? Could I borrow it?
- i) Do you wait/Are you waiting for the bus to Newcastle?
- j) Andy builds/is building his own house in the country.

2 Put each verb in brackets into either the present simple or the present continuous.

- a) There's nobody here, and the door's locked. What (we do) do we do now?
- b) What (you look) ..... at? (I wear) ..... the wrong clothes?
- c) I (look after) ..... Jack's dog this weekend. (you want) ..... to take it for a walk?
- d) Who (drive) ..... the Mercedes that's parked outside?
- e) I (still have) ..... a pain in my leg but it (get) ..... better.
- f) Who (Sue dance) ..... with? That's not her brother, is it?
- g) Harry always (look) ..... untidy! He (wear) ..... dirty jeans.
- h) I (write) ..... in reply to your advertisement in the *Daily News*.
- i) That plant I bought (not grow) ..... very much. And I (water) ..... it every day.
- j) Which hotel (you stay) ..... in when you (come) ..... here?

3 Decide whether the verb form in *italics* refers to present or future time.

- a) Where *are you staying* on Saturday night? ... future .....
- b) George *retires* at the end of next year. ....
- c) What are we doing when the guests *arrive*? .....
- d) *I'm trying* really hard to understand this book. ....
- e) Wait for me here until I *get* back. ....
- f) Sue *is leaving* in the morning. ....
- g) *I'm waiting* for the bus. ....
- h) I'm off now and *I'm taking* the car. ....
- i) They're *showing* a Woody Allen film on Channel 4 tonight. ....
- j) *I'm going* for a walk this evening. ....

4 Write each verb in the *-ing* form, then complete the spelling rules below.

write <u>writing</u>	swim .....	get .....
admit .....	annoy .....	begin .....
study .....	like .....	try .....
decide .....		

- a) If a word ends in vowel + consonant + *-e* (write) .....
- b) If a word ends in vowel + consonant (swim) .....
- c) Words which end in *-y* (try, annoy) .....

5 Rewrite each sentence. Use a verb from the box to replace the words in *italics*.

be cost feel have see ~~smell~~ taste have think of have

- a) This flower *has* a wonderful *perfume*.  
This flower smells wonderful.
- b) I think you *are behaving* in a very silly way.
- c) She *is expecting* a baby in the summer.
- d) Nancy *is considering* moving to Scotland.
- e) Don't go in. They *are holding* a meeting.
- f) I *am meeting* Janet this evening actually.
- g) Good clothes *are becoming* more and more *expensive*.
- h) I *am trying* the soup to see if it needs more salt.
- i) Helen *is taking* a bath at the moment.
- j) I *think* that you would be happier in another job.

**6** Put each verb in brackets into either the present simple or the present continuous.

Dear Aunt Jean,  
 I (1) *am just writing* (just write) to tell you how much I  
 (2) ..... (appreciate) the money you sent me, and to tell you  
 how I (3) ..... (get on) in my first term at university. Actually, I  
 (4) ..... (really enjoy) myself! I (5) ..... (study)  
 quite hard as well, but at the moment I (6) ..... (spend) a lot of  
 time just making friends. I (7) ..... (still stay) with my friend  
 Sue, and I (8) ..... (look for) somewhere of my own to live. Only  
 a few of the first-year students (9) ..... (live) in college here,  
 and I (10) ..... (seem) to be spending a lot of time travelling  
 backwards and forwards. I (11) ..... (go) to lectures every  
 morning, and most afternoons I (12) ..... (study) in the library.  
 In fact I (13) ..... (write) this letter instead of an essay on  
*Hamlet!* I (14) ..... (think) I'll buy some new clothes with the  
 money you sent. Everything (15) ..... (cost) a lot here, and I  
 (16) ..... (save) to buy a winter coat. It  
 (17) ..... (get) really cold here in the evenings. I now  
 (18) ..... (know) some other students and generally speaking  
 we (19) ..... (have) quite a good time socially! I  
 (20) ..... (also learn) to drive. See you soon.  
 Katherine

**Key points**

- 1 The present simple describes facts and habitual actions. The present continuous describes actions which are still in progress at the time of speaking.
- 2 Many verbs which describe states rather than momentary events can only be used in the simple form. Many verbs describing mental activities (*understand, know*) are of this kind.
- 3 Some verbs have both state and event meanings, but the meanings are not the same.
- 4 When describing a photograph, we usually describe the scene as if it is happening now, and use the present continuous.
- 5 Present tense forms are also used to refer to future time. See Grammar 3.
- 6 Where some languages use present tenses, English uses the present perfect. See Grammar 2.

*I've lived in Milan all my life.*

→ SEE ALSO

**Grammar 3:** Future time  
**Grammar 5:** Consolidation 1

**1** Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

- a) There's a party at Mary's house next week.  
**having**  
 Next week ..... *Mary's having a* ..... party at her house.
- b) When you phoned me, it was my lunch time.  
**I**  
 When you phoned me ..... lunch.
- c) I started working here three years ago.  
**for**  
 I've ..... three years.
- d) Our meeting is tomorrow.  
**a**  
 We ..... tomorrow.
- e) I haven't had a Chinese meal for ages.  
**since**  
 It's ..... a Chinese meal.
- f) David went home before we arrived.  
**had**  
 When we ..... home.
- g) The arrival time of Helen's flight is 8.00.  
**at**  
 Helen's flight ..... 8.00.
- h) Hurry up! We'll get to the theatre after the beginning of the play.  
**will**  
 By the time we get to the theatre, the play ..... begun.
- i) Oh no! My wallet is missing.  
**lost**  
 Oh no! I ..... wallet.
- j) I've only recently started wearing glasses.  
**wear**  
 I ..... recently.