

B Grammar

1 Present simple

+	verb / verb + -s	<i>She works in London.</i>
-	do/does not + verb	<i>He doesn't work in London.</i>
?	do/does ... + verb?	<i>Where do you work?</i>

We use the present simple:

- to say when things happen if they take place regularly:
*They **eat lunch at two o'clock**.*
- to talk about permanent situations:
*I **work** in London.*
- to state general truths:
*Those bags **sell** really fast.*
*The moon **goes** round the earth.*
- to talk about habits and how often they happen:
*You **buy new clothes every Saturday**.*
- to describe the plots of books and films:
*The story **begins and ends** in Spain. The year **is** 1937.*

2 Present continuous

+	am/is/are + verb + -ing	<i>He's working in London this week.</i>
-	am/is/are not + verb + -ing	<i>I'm not working in London this week.</i>
?	am/is/are ... + verb + -ing?	<i>Are you working in London this week?</i>

We use the present continuous:

- to talk about the present moment:
*I'm **wearing** a pair of old jeans.*
*I'm **looking** at a blue bag right now.*
- to suggest that an action is temporary, often with words like *now*, *at the moment*, *at present* or *just*:
*They're **eating** lunch at the moment.*
*I'm **working** in London this week. (= I don't usually work in London)*
- for an action around the time of speaking, which has begun but is not finished:
*I'm **cleaning** my room.*
*I'm **looking round the shops**. (Millie isn't looking round at this moment – she has stopped to talk to Lisa – but she plans to continue looking round later.)*
- for changing or developing situations:
*Navy blue bags **are getting** really fashionable.*
*The Earth's temperature **is rising**.*
- with a word like *always* or *continually* if we want to criticise or complain:
*You're **always buying** new clothes! (= you buy too many)*
*He's **always complaining** about things.*
- with *always* when something unexpected happens several times:
*I'm **always meeting** my neighbour John near the station. I guess he works somewhere near there.*

1 Present tenses

3 State verbs

These verbs are nearly always used in a simple rather than a continuous tense. They are mostly about thoughts, feelings, belonging and the senses:

... *that leather bag you want to get* (~~not you are wanting to~~)

You don't deserve to hear it. (~~not you aren't deserving to~~)

The following are some important state verbs:

- thoughts: *believe, know, mean, realise, recognise, remember, suppose, understand, feel* (= believe), *think* (= believe):

*I **think** you're wrong.*

*We **feel** this decision is right.*

- feelings: *adore, dislike, despise, hate, like, love, want, wish, prefer*:

*They **despise** me because of the way I'm living.*

- belonging: *belong, have* (= possess), *own, possess*:

*It **belongs** to my father.*

*The manager **has** the biggest company car.*

- senses: *smell, taste, hear, see*:

*This sauce **tastes** great.*

*I **hear** what you're saying to me, but I don't agree.*

*Do you **see** anything you want to buy here?*

We use *can* with these verbs to show we are talking about this moment:

*I **can see** you're tired.*

*I **can hear** someone in the next room.*

- other state verbs: *need, contain, deserve, fit, seem, look* (= seem), *look like, matter, weigh*:

*This medicine **contains** aspirin.*

*Mark **weighs** 70 kilos.*

⚠ *Think* is not a state verb when it refers to what someone is doing, not what they believe:

*I'm **thinking** about my holiday.*

⚠ *Have* can be continuous when it does not mean 'possess':

*Steve **is having** a difficult time at college this term.*

*Can I phone you back later? We're **having** lunch right now.*

⚠ *Taste* and *smell* can be continuous when they refer to what someone is doing:

*I'm **tasting** the sauce.*

⚠ *Listen to, watch* and *look at* are not state verbs and can be continuous:

*We're **listening** to music and Diane **is watching** a DVD upstairs.*

⚠ *See* can be continuous when it means 'meet with':

*Lara's at the medical centre. She's **seeing** a doctor about her sore throat.*

⚠ *Weigh* can be continuous when it refers to what someone is doing:

*The shop assistant **is weighing** the cheese.*

4 The verb to be

The verb *to be* is nearly always used in a simple rather than a continuous tense. When it is continuous it emphasises that a situation is temporary. It often describes a person's behaviour:

*You're **being** so impatient!* (Millie doesn't believe that Lisa is normally an impatient person.)

*My brother **is being** very nice to me this week. I wonder what he wants!*

*Francis is filling in a form online, so we're all **being** quiet as we don't want him to make any mistakes.*

C Grammar exercises

1 Choose the correct sentence from each pair.

- 1 a My brother lives with us until he can find a flat of his own.
b My brother is living with us until he can find a flat of his own. ✓
- 2 a Megan goes to Hong Kong every January.
b Megan's going to Hong Kong every January.
- 3 a I don't have enough money for a long holiday this year.
b I'm not having enough money for a long holiday this year.
- 4 a Everyone needs a break from work sometimes.
b Everyone is needing a break from work sometimes.
- 5 a What period of history do you study this term?
b What period of history are you studying this term?
- 6 a The team manager looks bad-tempered in public, but he's always being very kind to young players.
b The team manager looks bad-tempered in public, but he's always very kind to young players.

2 Complete these sentences with the present simple or present continuous form of the verbs.

- 1 My father knows (know) all about mending cars, but nothing about bicycles.
- 2 This pie smells (smell) a bit odd. What's in it?
- 3 I don't like (like) the jacket of this suit, but unfortunately the trousers don't fit (not fit) me any more.
- 4 You're very quiet this evening. What are you thinking (you / think) about?
- 5 Who is (be) that man? Why is your sister being (your sister / be) so rude to him?
She has (have) such beautiful manners normally.

3 Fill in the gaps with the present simple or present continuous form of the verbs.

- 1 **Alex:** Why are you wearing (you / wear) my coat?
Ben: Oh, I'm sorry. It looks (look) like mine in this light.
- 2 **Carl:** I don't know (have) no idea what this sentence means (mean).
Can you translate it?
Donna: No, sorry. I don't understand (not understand) it either.
- 3 **Eddie:** Are you seeing (you / see) those men near the door? They are looking (look) at us very strangely.
Fergus: Yes. You're right. Do you recognise (you / recognise) them from anywhere?
Eddie: No, but they certainly seem (seem) to know us. They are coming (come) across to speak to us.
- 4 **Gina:** What are you doing (you / do) in the kitchen? Our guests are waiting (wait) for their dessert, and you are getting (get) in my way!
Hamid: I just want (want) to be somewhere quiet for a while. Everyone is being (be) so noisy this evening! I don't know (not know) why – it's very unusual.

1 Present tenses

4 Complete the email using the present simple or present continuous form of these verbs.

behave come cost eat enjoy feel go have like love pay realise say
seem serve show smile stay take visit

Dear Stephanie,

How are you? We're fine. Our trip round the States (1) is going well and we (2) _____ ourselves a lot. One good surprise is that things (3) _____ less here than back home. For example, this weekend we (4) _____ in a motel beside a lake and we (5) _____ only \$65 per night for a room with a beautiful view.


The only thing we (6) _____ (*not*) much is the food. Restaurants (7) _____ dinner rather early. We (8) _____ (*never*) at six o'clock at home so we (9) _____ (*not*) hungry then and American portions (10) _____ very big to us. Apart from that, we (11) _____ a wonderful time. We (12) _____ lots of interesting little towns and we absolutely (13) _____ the scenery.

People here (14) _____ in a very friendly manner towards strangers. All the shop assistants (15) _____ at us, and everyone (16) _____ 'Have a nice day!'

At home, the TV (17) _____ (*always*) us bad news stories about the States, but in fact, when you (18) _____ here, you (19) _____ it's a really great place.

We (20) _____ lots of photos to show you.

Much love,
Mick and Mary



5 Cambridge First candidates made mistakes in the following sentences. Choose the correct verb forms.

- 1 I want / *am wanting* to help out at the camp this summer.
- 2 Most Spanish companies *belong* / *are belonging* to multinationals nowadays.
- 3 I *think* / *am thinking* about interviewing my grandfather's friend, who collects vintage cars.
- 4 My father went to that university, so he *knows* / *is knowing* all about it.
- 5 Ned *has* / *is having* a lot of problems with his teacher at the moment.
- 6 Every town *needs* / *is needing* a library, even though everyone has the internet nowadays.