

1

present simple, present continuous (1)

basic uses of present simple and present continuous

- Use present simple for facts, or things that always happen.
*Water **freezes** at 32 degrees Fahrenheit and 0 degrees Celsius.*
*Sea water **contains** on average 2.7% salt by weight.*
- Use present simple for routines and habits.
*The birds **return** to the island every spring.*
*Fiddler crabs **turn** red when they become angry.*
- Use present continuous for actions happening at the moment of speaking, and not finished.
*Sorry, I'm busy at the moment. **I'm doing** my homework.*
- Present continuous is also used for actions happening generally around the time of speaking, rather than exactly at the same time.
***I'm reading** a really interesting book.*

state and action verbs

Some verbs have meanings which refer to states or conditions, and others have meanings which refer to actions. State verbs are either only used in simple form, or have a different meaning when used in continuous form.

state verbs normally in present simple

- *belong, consist of, contain, cost, depend on, deserve, matter, own, possess, resemble*
*Does this **belong** to you?*
*Fresh fruit **contains** a range of vitamins.*
- *believe, imagine, know, prefer, realize, understand, mean*
*Some people still **believe** that the Earth is flat.*
- *seem*
*This **seems** to be what we're looking for.*
- *cost* is sometimes used in continuous to describe a process that is still going on.
*We're having a house built, and **it's costing** a fortune!*
- *realize, regret, understand*
These are normally used with state meanings in present simple, but can be used in continuous to show a changing situation, usually with an adverbial which shows that change is happening.
*Some people **don't realize** how dangerous cars can be.*
*People **are slowly realizing** the cost of global warming.*
***Do you understand** this point?*
*We're **understanding** more and more about the universe.*

verbs with state and action meanings

state

- *do*
*What **do you do**? (= what's your job)*
- *be, have*
*This house **is** over 100 years old.*
*Do you **have** a car?*
- *imagine, suppose, think, expect*
*I **suppose** this is Jim.*
*I **imagine** you feel the same.*
*What **do you think**? (= have an opinion)*

*I **don't expect** him to understand*

action

- What **are you doing**? (= explain your actions)*
- He **is being** very silly!*
***I'm having a great time** here.*
- You're **supposing** he is guilty. (= make an assumption)*
*Ghosts! No, you're **imagining** things!*
*What are **you thinking**?*
***I'm thinking** of changing jobs. (= considering)*
***Are you expecting** someone?*

1 Underline the correct form.

- a Some kinds of fish contain / are containing high levels of dangerous metals.
- b Scientists nowadays slowly begin to understand / are slowly beginning to understand more about how the brain works.
- c What do you think / are you thinking of Kate's new hairstyle? It's unusual, isn't it?
- d Loud music can be really annoying. Some people don't realize / aren't realizing what a nuisance it can be.
- e You can't really have seen a UFO! You imagine / are imagining things!
- f Technicians report that they have / are having difficulty installing the new computer system.
- g No wine for me! I take / I'm taking antibiotics for an ear infection.
- h In career terms, having a good degree appears / is appearing to make little difference.
- i The National Theatre considers / is considering putting on a new production of *Uncle Vanya*.
- j Does this wallet belong / Is this wallet belonging to you?

2 Underline the present simple / continuous verb errors in the text. Write a correction at the end of the line where necessary.

15 Tiptree Rd
Warwick
CV29 7AL

Friday, 15th October

Hi everyone,

I have problems getting a new phone connection here, so instead of sending e-mails as usual, I'm actually sitting down to write a letter.

I'm imagining you'll be surprised to get this as I've never been much of a letter-writer. I'm putting the return address in big letters at the top, because to tell you the truth I'm beginning to feel quite lonely here.

Well, perhaps I'm not meaning that exactly. There are plenty of people for me to talk to. In fact I settle in to the student life quite well, but I don't really know anyone yet. I've got a room in a house a long way from college, and I'm seeming to spend a long time on the bus. A lot of students here cycle, so I'm trying to find a cheap bike, and I also think of moving nearer to college when I can find somewhere. Sorry - an interruption, someone knocks at the door. More later. Later. One of the girls downstairs has a party, and I'm invited. And the phone line has been fixed, so I'm expecting you'll get an e-mail from me very soon! In fact, I consider tearing up this letter, so just ignore everything I've said ...

- a I'm having
- b
- c
- d
- e
- f
- g
- h
- i
- j
- k
- l
- m
- n
- o

3 Complete the text with the present simple or present continuous form of the verb in brackets.

European traffic accident rates fail to meet targets

Although the number of deaths **caused** in traffic accidents in the EU **a** (go down) *is going down*, experts **b** (still try) to find ways of reducing the number throughout the EU to around 25,000 **fatalities** per year by 2010. Traffic safety **c** (improve) but experts **d** (believe) that **achieving** the 2010 goal will prove difficult. **Recent** statistics **e** (show) that in 2005 in the EU 41,600 people were killed in road accidents. Although progress has been made, most experts **f** (agree) that this figure will have fallen to only around 32,000 by 2010, which **g** (means) that the EU **target** will be missed by about 7,000. On the other hand, as the amount of traffic **h** (increase), it is possible **to argue that** the situation is not really as bad as it **i** (look) However one **j** (interpret) the statistics, it **k** (remain) true that as time goes on, it **l** (become) harder and harder to reduce the figures, especially since accident-reduction schemes **m** (cost) a lot of money. Many countries have tried and failed to reduce the number of accidents, and in the EU as a whole, only Sweden **n** (pursue) the goal of zero accidents. Accident reduction is more difficult for newer EU members who **o** (currently face) very rapid growth in traffic and **p** (have) difficulty in building new roads and in introducing safety **measures** at a fast enough rate. To complicate matters, most new members **q** (have) very little experience in dealing with the demands of heavy traffic. Experts **r** (suggest) that any safety programme must also set about changing the way drivers **s** (behave) Despite what people often **t** (say) it **u** (seem) to be the younger generation that **v** (cause) most accidents. **In line with** this research, many countries **w** (introduce) **tougher** driving tests, and **x** (concentrate) on the main causes of accidents: speed, **reckless overtaking**, alcohol, and **over-confidence**.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A Write four sentences about yourself using these verbs:
enjoy hope regret think (of +ing)
- B Use a dictionary and write an example for each of these verbs, using present simple.
*belong consist of contain cost depend on
deserve matter own possess resemble*

2

present simple, present continuous (2)

more uses of present simple

Present simple is also used

- in informal spoken instructions, with you.

You open this part of the camera here. Then you take out the battery.

Formal written instructions such as recipes use the imperative form.

Take 300g of flour. Add three eggs.

- in newspaper headlines to describe events. There are other conventions for writing headlines, such as leaving out articles, using active verbs, and preferring short words.

Three **die** in plane crash.

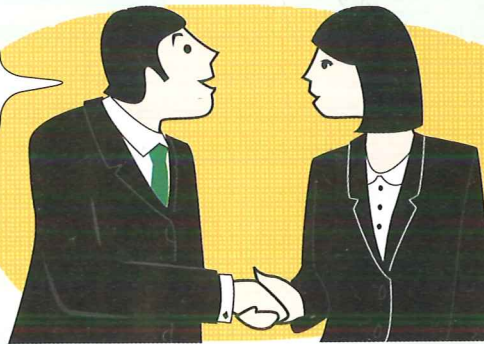
MPs **say** no to green laws.

- for performative verbs *accept, apologize, dare, deny, understand, see* (with a meaning of 'understand') etc. These are verbs which, when used in present simple, describe an action as the word is spoken.

I agree with you. I accept your offer.

I understand. I see.

Thank you,
I accept your offer.



- for verbs reporting news: *gather, hear, see, tell, say, understand*.

I hear you've got a new job.

People tell me she's difficult to work with.

We understand that the house is now for sale.

(See Unit 19, reporting verbs)

- in *here comes, there goes, here lies*.

These expressions include inversion of verb and subject.

Here comes trouble! There goes a brave man!

Here lies John Smith. (written on a tomb)

colloquial narrative and commentary

Although narrative generally uses past tenses, there are uses of present simple and present continuous in everyday speech.

- In jokes, present simple can be used instead of past simple for narrative events, and present continuous instead of past continuous.

A man goes to see his psychiatrist. He says he is having problems because he imagines he's a pair of curtains. The psychiatrist tells him to pull himself together.

- In sports commentaries, present simple is often used to describe events happening as the commentator speaks.

And now Rooney crosses the half-way line and passes to Giggs.

Present continuous is also used in commentaries for continuous and changing events.

And the two Italians are moving up in the outside lane.

- Plot summaries in films and books are generally in present simple.
Tom and Daisy are an old couple who live a dull life in a suburb of Birmingham. But everything changes when their granddaughter Karen comes to stay.

summary of meaning in the continuous

- verbs that describe activities which continue for some time, eg *play, rain, read, work, write* etc
It's raining. The children are playing upstairs.

Note that the activity may not be going on at the exact moment of speaking.

I'm reading Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. (I haven't finished it yet, but I'm not reading at this moment)

- verbs that describe a changing situation, eg *change, get + adjective, grow, increase* etc
It's getting dark. Computers are changing all the time.

repeated actions with *continually* etc

In everyday speech we can use present continuous with an adverb such as *continually, forever, constantly, always* to criticize actions that we feel are irritating or annoying, or which we wish to exaggerate. The adverb is usually stressed in speech.

You are continually interrupting!

He's forever getting into trouble!



simple or continuous?

In some cases, the choice between simple and continuous is part of the attitude of the writer or speaker, especially in explanations and descriptions of situations.

Professor Thorne explains that some patients eat too much because they grow up in families with poor eating habits.

Professor Thorne explains that some patients are eating too much because they are growing up in families with poor eating habits.

The first example (present simple) describes something that is generally true, the second (present continuous) describes something more temporary or something not always the case.

These exercises include material from Unit One.

1 Underline the correct verb form. Tick the sentence if both forms are possible.

- a I can't walk any more. My knee is really hurting / really hurts. ✓
- b This cheese is smelling / smells terrible!
- c Thanks for your e-mail. I'm hoping / I hope to get back to you very soon.
- d 'What are you doing / do you do?' 'I'm a musician.'
- e We're having our house completely redecorated. It's costing / It costs a lot.
- f In this country, more than a million people are living / live in poverty.
- g Can you stop the car? I'm feeling / I feel a bit sick.
- h 'What's the answer?' 'Wait a moment, I'm thinking / I think.'
- i I think we're beginning / we begin to understand this problem.
- j Nice to see you again! You're looking / You look really great!

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

- a Somebody (knock) is knocking at the door. Can you see who it is?
- b First you (cook) the onions in a little oil until they are golden brown.
- c Carlos (forever lose) his temper with people! He must learn to calm down.
- d Here (come) the bus! You'd better hurry!
- e 'Where's Jack?' 'He (read) the paper in the kitchen.'
- f Whenever I put up my hand, Harry (kick) me under the desk.
- g I'm sorry, but I (not understand) you.
- h Maria (leave) now, so could you get her coat?
- i Come and eat your dinner. It (get) cold.
- j I (hear) you did really well in your exams. Well done!

3 Complete each sentence with the present simple or present continuous form of the verb in brackets.

- a (you do) Are you doing anything at the moment? I need some help with the computer.
- b This product (contain) no added chemicals of any kind.
- c Nobody (visit) Rome without going to see the ruins of the Roman Forum.
- d Sarah (begin) to regret not taking the job in France she was offered.
- e Martin (see) Tina at the moment. They've been going out together for the past month.
- f I'm sorry, but I (not know) where George is at the moment.
- g 'Is Helen ready yet?' 'She (take) her time, but she says she'll be ready soon.'
- h The larger of the two rooms (measure) 8 m by 4 m.
- i What (happen) in the street now? I can't see anything from here.
- j There's nobody else to do the job, so I (suppose) I'll have to do it.

4 Complete the two texts with the present simple or present continuous form of the verb in brackets. If both forms are possible, write both.

Doctors express concern over heavy school bags

Every year thousands of children **a** (go) go to the doctor because of back pain, and in fact, this kind of problem **b** (rapidly become) becomes one of the most common childhood complaints. And what exactly **c** (cause) causes this outbreak of back strain and muscle fatigue? It **d** (seem) seems that even quite young children **e** (take) take more and more to school – not just books, but also clothes and games players – and their backpacks **f** (simply weigh) weigh too much. 'Some kids **g** (carry) carry more than 25% of their bodyweight in a bag that has a nice cartoon character on the bag, but which **h** (actually give) gives them serious backache,' reported Dr Elaine Sachs, a GP in North London. 'Most parents **i** (simply not realize) don't realize what **j** (happen) happens to their children.'

Investigators to report on train crash

Accident investigators **k** (still examine) are examining the wreckage of the high-speed train which left the rails and overturned in northwest England last week. According to reports, they **l** (not believe) don't believe the accident **m** (involve) involved driver error. 'We **n** (expect) expect to publish a inquiry into this accident quite soon,' a spokesman announced yesterday. 'Engineers **o** (work) are working round the clock to replace the track, and we **p** (hope) hope to restore a normal service within two weeks. We **q** (realize) realize that people **r** (depend) depend on the railway, and we **s** (understand) don't understand how much everyone has been shocked by this accident. However, we **t** (check) are checking thousands of sections of track all over the country to make sure that nothing like this can ever happen again.'

5 Rewrite the sentence so that it contains a word from the list and has same meaning.

belong - **contain** - **cost** - **look** - **matter** - **see** - **seem** - **smell** - **think** - **weigh**

- a Is this car yours, sir? Does this car belong to you, sir?
- b This perfume has a nice smell. _____
- c I think there's a mistake. _____
- d I don't understand what you mean. _____
- e What's your opinion? _____
- f At birth a baby elephant is about 90 kg in weight. _____
- g Is the price important? _____
- h What's the price of this model? _____
- i This book could be interesting. _____
- j What's in the box? What _____

6 Write a new sentence with the same meaning containing a form of the word in capitals.

- a Apparently, Harry is a very good card player. SAY
They say Harry is a very good card player.
- b This maths problem is incomprehensible to me! UNDERSTAND
- c I have the same opinion as you. AGREE
- d 'Where's Anna?' 'At work in the garden.' WORK
- e Stop shouting, the teacher's in the corridor. COME
- f Somebody is at the door. KNOCK
- g According to some people, UFOs have landed on Earth. BELIEVE
- h It's hotter all the time in here. GET
- i Skiing is my favourite sport. LOVE
- j Peter keeps losing his homework! ALWAYS

7 Complete the text with the present simple or present continuous form of the verb in brackets.

Just joking - Internet Surfer

File Edit View Bookmarks Toolbox About Surfer

Back Forward

Address

Big Brother's watching you!

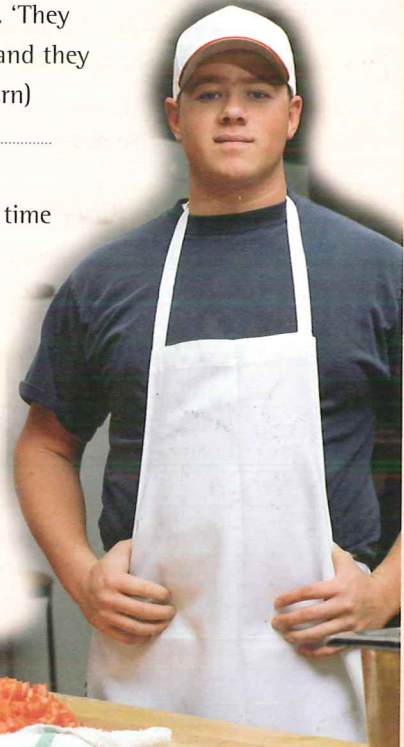
A burglar **a** (try) *tries* to break into a big house in the country. He **b** (walk) very quietly across the garden when he **c** (hear) a voice: 'Big Brother **d** (watch) you!' He **e** (turn) around, but he **f** (not see) anything. So he **g** (creep) nearer to the house. Suddenly he **h** (hear) the voice again and he **i** (see) a cage hanging from a tree. A parrot **j** (sit) in the cage. The burglar **k** (ask) the parrot, 'Did you say that stuff about Big Brother?' The parrot **l** (answer) 'Yes I did.' 'Is that your name then?' The parrot **m** (say) 'No, my name's Montmorency.' The burglar **n** (laugh) 'What kind of stupid idiot would name his parrot Montmorency?' The parrot **o** (reply) 'The same stupid idiot who named his Rottweiler 'Big Brother' - that's the guard dog that **p** (stand) right behind you!'

Loded...

- 8 Complete the text with the present simple or present continuous form of the verb in brackets. Where both are possible, write both.

Students now taking longer to finish studies

In the USA some university students nowadays **a** (spend) *are spending* more and more time in university before graduating. In American universities, many students **b** (pay) their own fees, and this **c** (mean) more time working and less studying. Alan Chester is a 25-year-old journalism student from Ohio who **d** (take) six years to complete his undergraduate degree. In order to pay tuition fees and other expenses he **e** (work) four days a week in the university kitchen, while in the university holidays he **f** (do) a full-time job. 'I **g** (find) it difficult at the moment to study and pay my bills at the same time,' he **h** (admit) 'But I **i** (try) my best and I **j** (manage) to keep the wolf from the door.' Alan's parents **k** (understand) his decision to take longer to graduate. 'They **l** (know) what I **m** (go) through, and they **n** (help) me as much as they can. It's hard, but I **o** (learn) to look after myself, and I **p** (experience) stuff that might be useful one day when I'm a journalist.' He **q** (point out) that some students **r** (take) more time to graduate because they **s** (not really know) what they **t** (want) to study. 'New courses of study **u** (develop) all the time, new subjects **v** (appear) on the curriculum. Some students **w** (spend) time experimenting with different courses before choosing their major. So it's not all about money. I **x** (think) universities **y** (go) through a period of change like everything else, and students have to **adapt** to this changing situation.'



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A Use these verbs in present simple or present continuous to make more interview questions like these below: *do own believe in have like weigh*. Use the questions to interview a partner.

What do you think of ... ? (name a film book etc)
What are you reading at the moment?

- B Look these words up in a dictionary and find example sentences which use the present simple form: *gather, hear, see, tell, understand*

4

present perfect

present perfect simple

Use present perfect simple

- to refer to events connected to the present, without a definite past time, often with *just*.
*Someone **has stolen** my bike! I've **just had** an idea.*
- to refer to indefinite events that happened at an unknown time in the past. This time is often recent, and is often used in news items when the information is 'current'.
*Archaeologists **have discovered** an Anglo-Saxon palace in London.
Police **have recaptured** two escaped prisoners.*

The time can also be all time up to the present.

*No-one **has (ever) proved** that aliens exist.*

- to refer to indefinite events with a result in the present.
*My car **has broken down**. (That's why I want a lift from you)*
- to describe what has been done or how many things completed in a period of time.
*The building **has been completed** on time.
United **have scored** three goals, and there's still half an hour left.*
- to describe a living person's experiences, what he or she has done in life so far.
*She **has painted** some of the best portraits of recent years.*
- to describe a state that lasts up to the present, with state verbs.
*I've **worked** in this department for the past six months.*
- to refer to a repeated action in a period of time up to the present.
*I've **cooked** dinner every night for ten years!*
- with some time expressions.
*I've worked here **since** 2002.
This is the first time I've eaten squid!
We've **already** seen this film.*

Note that most time expressions can be used with various tenses.

*I've lived here **for** ten years. (present perfect simple: I'm still here)*

*I lived there **for** three years. (past simple: I'm not there now)*

present perfect simple or past simple

- Use present perfect simple for unfinished time and past simple for finished time.
*She **has painted** some of the best portraits of recent years.
She **painted** some of the best portraits of recent years.*
In the first sentence the action has happened in a period up to the present, and may well continue. In the second sentence the action is finished. The artist may be dead. The events are in a period of time not connected to the present.
- Use to show speaker attitude.
Speakers may decide whether they see an event as connected to the present (present perfect simple) or not (past simple). This may be a matter of time or place. Tense use is here a matter of choice, rather than of grammatical 'right' or 'wrong'.
*I've **left** my books at home. (The speaker feels the event is recent, or is still near home.)
I **left** my books at home (The speaker feels the event is distant in time and place.)*
- Use with different time expressions.
*I **haven't been** to the cinema for ages / a long time.*
Present perfect refers to an action over a period of time and *for* describes how long the period is.
*It's ages / a long time **since I went** to the cinema.
It's ages describes a period of time since an event and past simple describes when that event happened.*

present perfect continuous

Use present perfect continuous

- for recent continuing activities, continuing up to the present.
I've been waiting here for half an hour!
I haven't been taking a lot of exercise lately.



- to explain a present situation.
I've been washing the dog – that's why my clothes are wet.
- to emphasize the length of a continuing activity.
I've been working on my project all morning.
- for a repeated activity, to emphasize the repetition of the activity.
He's been phoning me every day since the party.
- with *how long* questions.
How long have you been having these disturbing dreams? (this is a continuing process, and isn't finished)
- with *mean, think, consider*.
I've been thinking of changing my job.
I've been meaning to get in touch with Helen.
- with time words *lately, recently, all (day), every (morning), for, since*.
What have you been doing lately / recently?
I've been working on these accounts all day / since 9.00 / for hours.

present perfect continuous or present perfect simple

- With state verbs such as *live, work*, there is little contrast.
How long have you lived here? How long have you been living here?
- Verbs such as *sit, stay, wait* prefer the continuous form.
- With event verbs, present perfect simple emphasizes completion.
I've written my letters. (finished)
I've been writing letters. (describes my activity during a recent period)

3 Rewrite the sentence so that it means the same as the first sentence. Use present perfect simple or continuous.

- a I came here at 3.00 and now it's 5.00.
- b I haven't seen this film before.
- c Mark is asleep.
- d I began work here in 1999.
- e Anna isn't here yet.
- f We don't know each other.
- g There isn't any food left.
- h We started waiting in this queue half an hour ago!
- i It's a long time since I was last here.
- j This is our seventh wedding anniversary.

- I have been here for* two hours.
- This is film.
- Mark to bed.
- I since 1999.
- Anna yet.
- We before.
- Someone all the food.
- We for half an hour.
- I a long time.
- We seven years.

social studies

4 Complete the text using the present perfect simple, present perfect continuous or past simple form of the verb in brackets.

The ageing population

The number of men and women in the US aged 60 or over still in work

a (rise) *has been rising* for more than a decade. Economists b (give) a number of reasons for this trend. First, since 1985 the US economy c (expand) so there d (be) an increased demand for labour. At the same time, the cost of some services, such as health care, e (increase) so workers need to earn more money in later life. In addition, changes in social security benefits and rules f (have) a considerable effect on labour patterns. First, in 1977 and 1983 changes to the Social Security Act g (raise) the full-benefit age from 65 to 67 and h (introduce) other changes that make delaying retirement more attractive. Then, in 1986 the Age Discrimination Act i (end) compulsory retirement for all workers, allowing them to work later in life. Changes to pension laws j (also encourage) workers to stay in employment longer, as this gives them more chance of a larger pension when they retire.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A Choose one of these topics and say what has happened, what has been happening or what has happened. These can be fictional if you prefer.
 news of family and friends climate change the political situation in your country
- B Use your knowledge of the news to make lists of:
 things that have happened recently things that have been happening
 things that happened

Need more practice? Go to the Review on page 208.

present perfect