

1.3 VERBS RARELY USED IN THE CONTINUOUS

- 1.3A** There are a number of verbs in English which we rarely use in a continuous tense. They often describe states of being, thinking, possessing or feeling:
- Verbs of believing, having, liking, etc.
- ✗ ~~Most people aren't believing in the existence of UFOs.~~
 - ✓ Most people **don't believe** in the existence of UFOs.
- The most common of these verbs are:

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

- 1.3B** It is possible to use many of the verbs in 1.3A in the continuous, but the verb either has a different meaning or expresses a temporary action:
- Using these verbs in the continuous
- 'Is Maria ready yet?' 'No, she's **having** a shower.' (= is taking)
- Now that there's electricity in the village, Santos **is thinking** of getting his house connected. (= is considering)

This table shows some of the common differences in use:

verb	use in present simple	use in present continuous
be	Your son is a very obedient child, isn't he?	Your son is being very obedient at the moment. (= is behaving obediently)
have	They're very rich. They have three homes and a yacht.	I'm having a really good time, thanks. (= am experiencing)
think	I think that the world's problems are getting worse.	I'm thinking of contributing to Oxfam. (= am considering)
mean	The sign means 'slow down'.	You're always meaning to call us, but you never do. (= are intending)
appear	It appears the police have not started the investigation.	The Philharmonic are appearing at the Palladium. (= are performing)
weigh	She weighs 70 kilos.	I'm weighing the ingredients for the cake. (= action of weighing)

- ① Some verbs of feeling can be used in both the simple and the continuous with no change in meaning:

My wrist **hurts/is hurting** again – I must go to the physiotherapist.

I think those mussels may have been off. **Do you feel/Are you feeling** OK today?

- 1.3C** We do not usually use the continuous form with verbs which describe a sense or a form of perception, e.g. hear, notice, see, smell, taste:
- Sense verbs

✗ ~~I'm noticing that your wife doesn't come to the wine tastings. Doesn't she drink?~~

✓ I **notice** that your wife doesn't come to the wine tastings. Doesn't she drink?

With verbs which describe a sense, we usually use the simple form or *can/could* + the verb when we do not deliberately use the sense, i.e. the use is involuntary:

Can you smell the fertiliser? We're really in the countryside now!

With *smell* and *taste*, we can use the continuous for a deliberate action:

I (**can**) **taste** cream in this. (there is cream in the dish; involuntary action)

I'm **tasting** the cream. (the cream might be off; intentional action)

- ① We usually use the verbs *see* and *hear* only in the involuntary sense, unless they have a different meaning, e.g. *I'm seeing a new man at present* (= going out with).

We use *look at*, *watch* or *listen to* for an intentional action:

✗ ~~Can you keep the noise down? I'm hearing the afternoon play.~~

✓ Can you keep the noise down? I'm **listening to** the afternoon play.

Read each pair of sentences below, A and B. The sentence which follows each pair is related to one of the sentences in the pair. (For example, it could come after the sentence or describe the sentence.) Write the letter of the correct sentence in the box.

- 0 A Steven's a difficult child.
B Steven's being difficult.
He isn't usually difficult.
- 1 A This salmon weighs more than six kilos.
B We're weighing the salmon to put a price on it.
This is a characteristic of the salmon.
- 2 A I invite everyone present to the opening of the new superstore.
B I'm inviting everyone to the opening of the new superstore.
I'm offering this invitation to you now.
- 3 A The dance group appears to have arrived at the theatre.
B The dance group is appearing at the theatre.
There are performances every evening.
- 4 A Mmm. I taste cinnamon in this. Lovely.
B I'm tasting it to see if there's enough cinnamon in it.
I need to check the quantity of cinnamon.
- 5 A I think house prices will rise again next year.
B I'm thinking of selling my house next year.
This is my opinion.
- 6 A My sister has a baby.
B My sister's having a baby.
My sister's pregnant.
- 7 A I smell lavender. Is there a bush in the garden?
B I'm smelling the lavender. It's a very strong variety.
The smell has just come to my attention.
- 8 A He's having a shower.
B He has a fantastic power shower in the main bathroom.
Why don't you wait in the living room?
- 9 A We guarantee that your children will be supervised by experienced instructors.
B My husband and I are guaranteeing the loan for Mrs Knight.
The company takes full responsibility.
- 10 A Is this an inadequate explanation or am I being stupid?
B I'm sorry, I don't understand. Am I really so stupid?
Is this a permanent characteristic of mine?

5 1 A 2 A 3 B 4 B 5 A
6 B 7 A 8 A 9 A 10 B