

The Present Continuous Tense

The present continuous (also called present progressive) is a verb tense which is used to show that an ongoing action is happening now, either at the moment of speech or now in a larger sense. The present continuous can also be used to show that an action is going to take place in the near future. Read on for detailed descriptions, examples, and present continuous exercises.

Present Continuous Forms

The present continuous is formed using *am/is/are* + **present participle**. Questions are indicated by inverting the subject and *am/is/are*. Negatives are made with *not*.

- Statement: You **are watching** TV.
- Question: **Are** you **watching** TV?
- Negative: You **are not watching** TV.

Complete List of Present Continuous Forms

Present Continuous Uses

USE 1 Now



Use the present continuous with normal verbs to express the idea that something is happening now, at this very moment. It can also be used to show that something is not happening now.

Examples:

- You **are learning** English now.
- You **are not swimming** now.
- **Are you sleeping?**
- I **am sitting**.
- I **am not standing**.
- **Is he sitting or standing?**
- They **are reading** their books.
- They **are not watching** television.
- What **are you doing?**
- Why **aren't you doing** your homework?

USE 2 Longer Actions in Progress Now



In English, "now" can mean: this second, today, this month, this year, this century, and so on. Sometimes, we use the present continuous to say that we are in the process of doing a longer action which is in progress; however, we might not be doing it at this exact second.

Examples: (All of these sentences can be said while eating dinner in a restaurant.)

- I **am studying** to become a doctor.
- I **am not studying** to become a dentist.
- I **am reading** the book *Tom Sawyer*.
- I **am not reading** any books right now.
- **Are you working** on any special projects at work?
- **Aren't you teaching** at the university now?

USE 3 Near Future

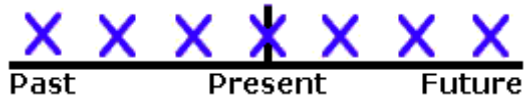


Sometimes, speakers use the present continuous to indicate that something will or will not happen in the near future.

Examples:

- I **am meeting** some friends after work.
- I **am not going** to the party tonight.
- **Is he visiting** his parents next weekend?
- **Isn't he coming** with us tonight?

USE 4 Repetition and Irritation with "Always"



The present continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happens. Notice that the meaning is like simple present, but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb+ing."

Examples:

- She **is always coming** to class late.
- He **is constantly talking**. I wish he would shut up.
- I don't like them because they **are always complaining**.

Present Continuous Tips

REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs / Mixed Verbs

It is important to remember that non-continuous verbs cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for mixed verbs cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using present continuous with these verbs, you must use simple present.

Examples:

- She **is loving** this chocolate ice cream. *Not Correct*
- She **loves** this chocolate ice cream. *Correct*

Before you begin the verb tense lessons, it is extremely important to understand that NOT all English verbs are the same. English verbs are divided into three groups: normal verbs, non-continuous verbs, and mixed verbs.

Types of verbs

Most verbs are "normal verbs." These verbs are usually physical actions which you can see somebody doing. These verbs can be used in all tenses.

Normal Verbs

to run, to walk, to eat, to fly, to go, to say, to touch, etc.

Examples:

- I **eat** dinner every day.
- I **am eating** dinner now.

Group II Non-Continuous Verbs

The second group, called "non-continuous verbs," is smaller. These verbs are usually things you cannot see somebody doing. These verbs are rarely used in continuous tenses. They include:

Abstract Verbs

to be, to want, to cost, to seem, to need, to care, to contain, to owe, to exist...

Possession Verbs

to possess, to own, to belong...

Emotion Verbs

to like, to love, to hate, to dislike, to fear, to envy, to mind...

Examples:

- He **is needing** help now. *Not Correct*
- He **needs** help now. *Correct*
- He **is wanting** a drink now. *Not Correct*
- He **wants** a drink now. *Correct*

Group III Mixed Verbs

The third group, called "mixed verbs," is the smallest group. These verbs have more than one meaning. In a way, each meaning is a unique verb. Some meanings behave like "non-continuous verbs," while other meanings behave like "normal verbs."

Mixed Verbs

to appear, to feel, to have, to hear, to look, to see, to weigh...

List of Mixed Verbs with Examples and Definitions:

to appear:

- Donna **appears** confused. *Non-Continuous Verb*
Donna seems confused.
- My favorite singer **is appearing** at the jazz club tonight. *Normal Verb*
My favorite singer is giving a performance at the jazz club tonight.

to have:

- I **have** a dollar now. *Non-Continuous Verb*
I possess a dollar.
- I **am having** fun now. *Normal Verb*
I am experiencing fun now.

to hear:

- She **hears** the music. *Non-Continuous Verb*
She hears the music with her ears.
- She **is hearing** voices. *Normal Verb*
She hears something others cannot hear. She is hearing voices in her mind.

to look:

- Nancy **looks** tired. *Non-Continuous Verb*
She seems tired.
- Farah **is looking** at the pictures. *Normal Verb*
She is looking with her eyes.

to miss:

- John **misses** Sally. *Non-Continuous Verb*
He is sad because she is not there.
- Debbie **is missing** her favorite TV program. *Normal Verb*
She is not there to see her favorite program.

to see:

- I **see** her. *Non-Continuous Verb*
I see her with my eyes.
- I **am seeing** the doctor. *Normal Verb*
I am visiting or consulting with a doctor. (Also used with dentist and lawyer.)
- I **am seeing** her. *Normal Verb*
I am having a relationship with her.
- He **is seeing** ghosts at night. *Normal Verb*
He sees something others cannot see. For example ghosts, aura, a vision of the future, etc.

to smell:

- The coffee **smells** good. *Non-Continuous Verb*
The coffee has a good smell.
- I **am smelling** the flowers. *Normal Verb*
I am sniffing the flowers to see what their smell is like.

to taste:

- The coffee **tastes** good. *Non-Continuous Verb*
The coffee has a good taste.

- I **am tasting** the cake. *Normal Verb*
I am trying the cake to see what it tastes like.

to think:

- He **thinks** the test is easy. *Non-Continuous Verb*
He considers the test to be easy.
- She **is thinking** about the question. *Normal Verb*
She is pondering the question, going over it in her mind.

to weigh:

- The table **weighs** a lot. *Non-Continuous Verb*
The table is heavy.
- She **is weighing** herself. *Normal Verb*
She is determining her weight.

Some Verbs Can Be Especially Confusing:

to be:

- Joe **is** American. *Non-Continuous Verb*
Joe is an American citizen.
- Joe **is being** very American. *Normal Verb*
Joe is behaving like a stereotypical American.
- Joe **is being** very rude. *Normal Verb*
Joe is behaving very rudely. Usually he is not rude.
- Joe **is being** very formal. *Normal Verb*
Joe is behaving very formally. Usually he is not formal