

Unit 3: PRESENT TENSES

PRESENT SIMPLE FORM:

1. THE VERB „BE“

Positive:

- I **am** Scottish.
- She **is** hungry.
- They **are** always late.

Negative:

- I **am not** cold.
- He **isn't** from Spain.
- We **aren't** at home.

Question:

- **Am** I next in the queue?
- **Are** you from Tokyo?
- **Is** he at the library at the moment?

2. OTHER VERBS

The **positive** is just the verb, with an extra 's' if the subject is *he*, *she*, or *it*. For a few verbs, there is a spelling change with *he*, *she* and *it* before the s. For example, *study* becomes *studies*.

- I **play** tennis every week.
- He **likes** chocolate.

There are also few verbs which are irregular:

- *have* becomes *has*
- *do* becomes *does*
- *go* becomes *goes*

To make the negative form, you need to use *do not* (*don't*) or *does not* (*doesn't*):

- You **don't** study very much.
- Julie **doesn't** like sport.

We use *do* or *does* before the subject to make the question:

- **Do** you work in an office?
- **Does** John play cricket every weekend?

PRESENT SIMPLE USE:

We use the *Present Simple* when something is generally or always true.

- People need food.
- It snows in winter here.
- Two and two make four.

Similarly, we need to use this tense for a situation that we think is more or less permanent.

- Where do you live?
- She works in a bank.
- I don't like mushrooms.

The next use is for habits or things that we do regularly. We often use adverbs of frequency (such as *often*, *always* and *sometimes*) in this case, as well as expressions like *every Sunday* or *twice a month*.

- Do you smoke?
- I play tennis every Tuesday.
- I don't travel very often.

We can also use the *Present Simple* for sports commentary, where the actions are so short that they are finished almost as soon as you've said the sentence.

- He takes the ball, he runs down the wing, and he scores!

We use the *Present Simple* to talk about the future when we are discussing a timetable or a fixed plan. Usually, the timetable is fixed by an organisation, not by us.

- School begins at nine tomorrow.
- What time does the film start?
- The plane doesn't arrive at seven. It arrives at seven thirty.

We also use the *Present Simple* to talk about the future after words like *when, until, after, before* and *as soon as*. These are sometimes called time clauses.

- I will call you when I have time. (Not ,will have'.)
- I won't go out until it stops raining.
- I'm going to make dinner after I watch the news.

We use the *Present Simple* in the first and the zero conditionals.

- If it rains, we won't come.
- If you heat water to 100 degrees, it boils.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS FORM

You make the *Present Continuous* (also called *Present Progressive*) with the verb **be** and the **present participle** (the -ing ending).

Positive:

- I **am reading** a book.
- You **are reading** a book.
- He **is reading** a book.

Negative:

- I **am not reading** a book.
- You **aren't reading** a book.
- He **isn't reading** a book.

Question:

- **Am I reading** a book?
- **Are you reading** a book?
- **Is he reading** a book?

PRESENT CONTINUOUS USE:

IMPORTANT: We can't use this tense (or any other continuous tense) with **stative verbs**.

We use the *Present Continuous* for things that are happening at the moment of speaking. These things usually last for quite a short time and they are not finished when we are talking about them.

- I'm working at the moment.
- Please call back as we are eating dinner now.
- Julie is sleeping.

We can also use this tense for other kinds of temporary situations, even if the action isn't happening at this moment.

- John's working in a bar until he finds a job in his field. (He might not be working now.)
- I'm reading a really great book.

We can use the *Present Continuous* for temporary or new habits. We often use this with expressions like *these days* or *at the moment*.

- He's eating a lot these days.
- She's swimming every morning (she didn't use to do this).
- You're smoking too much.

Another *Present Continuous* use is for habits that are not regular, but that happen very often. In this case we usually use an adverb like *always*, *forever* or *constantly*. Often, we use the *Present Continuous* in this way to talk about an annoying habit.

- You're forever losing your keys!
- She's constantly missing the train.
- Lucy's always smiling!

Next, we use this tense for definite future arrangements (with a future time word). In this case we have already made a plan and we are pretty sure that the event will happen in the future.

- I'm meeting my father tomorrow.
- We're going to the beach at the weekend.
- I'm leaving at three.

EXERCISES

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/grammar-exercises.html#present-simple-use>

STATE AND ACTION VERBS

Some English verbs, which we call **state, non-continuous** or **stative verbs**, aren't used in continuous tenses. These verbs often describe states that last for some time.

Here is a [list](#) of some common ones.

A verb which isn't stative is called a **dynamic verb**, and is usually an action.

Some verbs can be both **stative** and **dynamic**:

Be is usually a stative verb, but when it is used in the continuous it means *behaving* or *acting*.

- You are stupid. = it's part of your personality
- You are being stupid. = only now, not usually

Think

- think (stative) = have an opinion
I think that coffee is great.
- think (dynamic) = consider, have in my head
What are you thinking about?

Have

- have (stative) = own - I have a car
- have (dynamic) = part of an expression
I'm having a party / a picnic / a bath / a good time.

See

- see (stative) = see with your eyes / understand
I see what you mean.
I see her now, she's just coming along the road
- see (dynamic) = meet / have a relationship with
I've been seeing my boyfriend for three years.
I'm seeing Robert tomorrow.

Taste (*taste* is the same as other similar verbs such as *smell*)

- taste (stative) = has a certain taste
This soup tastes great.
- taste (dynamic) = the action of tasting
The chef is tasting the soup.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

An *active sentence* has the subject first (the person or thing that does the verb), followed by the verb, and finally the object (the person or thing that the action happens to).

- I drank two cups of coffee.

So, in the example the subject is *I*, the verb is *drank* and the object is *two cups of coffee*.

But, we don't always need to make sentences this way. We might want to put the object first, or perhaps we don't want to say who did something. In this case, we can use *the passive*, which puts the object first:

Two cups of coffee were drunk (we can add *by me* if we want, but it isn't necessary).

How to make the passive

We make the passive by putting the verb **to be** into whatever tense we need and then adding the **past participle** (-ed ending / 3rd verb form).

Verbs with two objects

Some verbs that have two objects can make two different active sentences, and so two different passive sentences too.

Active:

He **gave** me the book / He **gave** the book to me.

You can choose either of the two objects to be the subject of the passive sentence.

Passive:

I **was given** the book. / The book **was given** to me.

Other verbs like this are: *ask, offer, teach, tell, lend, promise, sell, throw*.

When should we use the Passive?

- When we want to change the focus of the sentence:
The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo Da Vinci.
- When who or what causes the action is *unknown, unimportant, obvious* or *people in general*:
He was arrested (obvious agent, the police).
My bike has been stolen (unknown agent).
- In factual or scientific writing:
The chemical is placed in a test tube and the data entered into the computer.
- In formal writing instead of using *someone / people / they*:
The brochure will be finished next month.
- In order to put the new information at the end of the sentence to improve style:
Three books are used regularly in the class. The books were written by Dr. Bell.
- When the subject is very long:
I was surprised by how well the students did in the test.