

THE Present Continuous TENSE

What Is The Present Continuous?

The present continuous is used for two main reasons. We use it for things happening right now.

I am watching this video.

I am teaching English right now.

And for things that have started but haven't finished.

I'm reading a new book.

I'm learning to cook Italian food.

Remember that the present continuous is for things that have started but haven't finished. If we use it for things that don't change, it seems like that thing will end. Here are some examples.

I'm living in London (but I will move soon).

I'm working as a teacher (but I will quit).

For permanent situations (things that don't change), use the present simple.

I live in London.

I work as a teacher.

There are also some verbs, called *stative verbs*, that are almost always used for permanent situations. So, we shouldn't use the present continuous with these either. Here are some examples.

I know the answer. (Not *I'm knowing*)
100ml of water weighs 100 grams. (Not *is weighing*)
I like you. (Not *I'm liking you*)

Making the Present Continuous

The present continuous is made of two things; the verb "to be", and a verb-ing. Let's look at how to make a sentence.

Positive Sentence

Subject + "to be" + verb-ing (+ object).			
I	am	learning	English.
He / She / It / The baby	is	learning	English.
You / We / They / The babies	are	learning	English.

To make a positive sentence, we need a subject (the person or thing that does the verb), the verb "to be" (is, am, are), and verb-ing. You might also like to add an object (the person or thing that receives the verb).

When we use the verb "to be", we can often contract them with a pronoun.

I am = I'm
 He is = He's She is = She's It is = It's
 You are = You're We are = We're They are = They're

These work well at the start of a sentence, but should not be used at the end of a sentence.

Negative Sentence

Subject + verb "to be" + not + verb-ing (+object).			
I'm	not	learning	English.
He's / She's / It's / The baby is	not	learning	English.
You're / We're / They're / The babies are	not	learning	English.

To make a negative sentence, we add *not* after the verb "to be".

The verb "to be" can sometimes also contract with "not". You can use these contractions at the end of a sentence too.

Am not = (no change) Is not = Isn't Are not = Aren't

Questions

Verb "to be"	+	subject	+	verb-ing (+object)?
Am		I		learning English?
Is		he / she / it / the baby		learning English?
Are		you / we / they / the babies		learning English?

To ask a yes/no question, move the verb "to be" to the start. Notice that we don't use contractions in these questions. The verb "to be" is the first word in the question, and we need to hear it clearly.

To answer a closed question, we use the verb "to be" again.

Yes, I am. / No, I'm not.
Yes, you are. / No, you're not.
Yes, he is. / No, he isn't.

To make an open question, add a question word at the start:

When am I learning English?
Where are you learning English?
Why is he learning English?

Test Your Knowledge

Now you know how to make the present simple, it's time to test what you have learned. Fill in the gaps using the words in brackets. You might also need the verb "to be".

1. I _____ a new book right now. (read)
2. She _____. (learn)
3. They _____ to the park. (walk)
4. He _____ for his exam. (not study)
5. Are you _____ TV? (watch)
6. They _____ today. (not work)
7. What _____? (you / do)
8. I _____ to the airport. (drive)

Present Continuous for the Future

There is one advanced point that you may not have heard before. Native speakers often use the Present Continuous to talk about future plans:

**I'm having dinner with my friends on Friday.
We're going to the park later.
What are we doing this weekend?**

We also use it for things happening soon, especially with verbs like go, come, or leave:

**I'm going to the gym now—see you later!
I'm leaving for class right now.
I'm going to bed.**

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Answers:

1. I am reading a new book right now.
2. She is learning.
3. They are walking to the park.
4. He is not studying for his exam.
5. Are you watching TV?
6. They are not working today.
7. What are you doing?
8. I am driving to the airport.