

Grammar Reference

Present Simple and Present Continuous

Present simple and present continuous

Meaning and use

We use the present simple for:

- things that we do regularly
- facts and truths
- habits
- permanent situations

We often use adverbs of frequency and time expressions like **every day, once a week, on Fridays**.

*I **check** my email **every day**.* (regular activity)

***Sheryl works** at the bank.* (permanent situation)

We use the present continuous for:
things that are happening now – at the time we are speaking,
temporary situations
activities that are in progress

We often use time expressions like **at the moment, today, this week**.

*Just a minute. I'**m checking** my email.* (now)

*She usually works in London, but she'**s working** from home this week.* (temporary situation)

*I'**m studying** Economics* (activity in progress)

Form - Positive

The present simple has the same form as the infinitive without 'to' for *I, you, we* and *they*. For *he, she* and *it*, we add **-s** or **-es** to the infinitive.

*They **live** in Rome.*
*Julian **starts** work at nine o'clock and **finishes** at five.*

The present continuous for *I* is **subject + am + verb-ing**. For *you, we* and *they*: **subject + are + -verb-ing**. For *he, she, it*: **subject + is + verb-ing**. We usually use contractions (*I'm, he's, they're*, etc.) when we are speaking.

*Can I call you back later? We'**re having** dinner right now.*

Form - Negative

The negative present simple is **subject + don't** (do not) + **infinitive without 'to'** for *I, you, we* and *they*, and **subject + doesn't** (does not) + **infinitive without 'to'** for *he, she* and *it*.

*I **don't eat** meat.*
*It **doesn't** usually **snow** in October.*

The negative present continuous for *I* is **I'm not + verb-ing**. For *you, we* and *they*: **subject + aren't + verb-ing**. For *he, she, it*: **subject + isn't + verb-ing**.

*He **isn't answering** his mobile at the moment.*

Form - questions

The present simple question form is **do/does + subject + infinitive without 'to'**.

***Do you read** the news online every day?*

***Does the supermarket sell** stamps?*

The present continuous question form is **am/is/are + subject + verb-ing**.

What are you doing?

Is it raining?**Take note: spelling changes**

In the present simple, regular verbs end in **-s** or **-es**, but **-y** changes to **-i**.

marry – marries study – studies

In the present continuous, all verbs end in **-ing**, but sometimes the spelling changes.

make – making sit – sitting die – dying

Take note: spelling

In the present simple, regular verbs end in **-s** or **-es**, but **-y** changes to **-i**.

*marry – marries
study – studies*

In the present continuous, all main verbs end in **-ing**, but sometimes the spelling changes.

*make – making
sit – sitting
die – dying*

Take note: verbs we don't use in the present continuous

There are some verbs that we don't usually use in the continuous form. They are often verbs linked to the senses and thinking, for example: **hear, see, smell, hate, know, understand, believe, want, need.**

Wrong: *Could you explain that again? I'm not understanding.*

Correct: *Could you explain that again? I don't understand.*

Practice**Match questions 1-8 with answers a-h.**

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Does it snow in the UK? | a. My home's in Brazil. |
| 2. Is it snowing in the UK? | b. Yes, I'm the managing director. |
| 3. Do you work here? | c. No, I've got a day off. |
| 4. Are you working today? | d. Just coke, usually. |
| 5. Where do you live? | e. It's water. |
| 6. Where are you living? | f. In a friend's flat in London. |
| 7. What do you drink? | g. Not right now. |
| 8. What are you drinking? | h. Only in winter. |

Answers

1. Does it snow in the UK? (h) Only in winter.

[Use the present simple for truths and facts.]

2. Is it snowing in the UK? (g) Not right now.

[Use the present continuous for things that are/aren't happening now.]

3. Do you work here? (b) Yes, I'm the managing director.

[Use the present simple for permanent situations.]

4. Are you working today? (c) No, I've got a day off.

[Use the present continuous for temporary situations.]

5. Where do you live? (a) My home's in Brazil.

[Use the present simple for permanent situations.]

6. Where are you living? (f) In a friend's flat in London.

[Use the present continuous for temporary situations.]

7. What do you drink? (d) Usually just coke.

[Use the present simple for habits.]

8. What are you drinking? (e) It's water.

[Use the present continuous for things happening now.]