

Unit 1 Present Continuous and Present Simple (1)

We can use the present continuous with some state verbs (e.g attract, like, look, sound) when we want to emphasise that a situation is temporary or for a period of time around the present. Compare:

Jean stays with us quite often. The children love having her here.

and

Jean is with us right now. The children are loving having her here.

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Some verbs have different meaning when they are used to talk about states and when they describe actions. With their 'state' meanings, they usually take simple rather than continuous forms. With their 'action' meanings, they may take simple or continuous forms, depending on context. Compare:

The new treatment for influenza doesn't appear to work (appear: state = seem)

and

Madonna is currently appearing in a musical on Broadway (appear: action = take part)

Do you think it is a good idea? (think: state = have an opinion)

and

I am thinking of going in August (think: action = consider)

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With some words describing mental states (e.g find, realise, regret, think, understand) we can use the present continuous to emphasise that we have recently started to think about something or we are not sure about something. Compare:

I regret that the company will have to be sold (= I have made the decision and I am sorry about it)

and

I am regretting my decision to give her a job (= I am increasingly aware that it was the wrong decision)

When it means 'think carefully about' the verb *consider* is only used with the present continuous:

- He is considering taking early retirement (*not* He considers taking early retirement)

Some verb describing preferences and mental states (e.g agree, conclude, know, prefer, believe) are rarely used with the present continuous:

- I believe you now (*not* I'm believing you now)

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We use the present simple with the verbs which perform the action they describe:

- I admit I can't see as well as I used to
- We apologise for not replying earlier

Other verbs like this (sometimes called performatives) include *acknowledge, advice, beg, confess, congratulate, declare, deny, forbid, guarantee, name, order, permit, predict, promise, refuse, remind, request, thank, warn*.

Some verbs used as performatives in affirmative (positive) sentences (apologise, deny, guarantee, promise, suggest) have a similar meaning with either the present simple or the present continuous in negative sentences:

- I don't deny/I'm not denying taking the books, but Andy said it would be okay.

Not that we can use modals with performatives, often to make what we say more tentative or polite

- We would advise you to come two hours before the flight leaves
- I must beg you to keep this secret