

MODULE 2: SIMPLE PRESENT AND PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSES

SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

The simple present tense is used to state facts, describe nouns (persons, places, things), state needs and preferences, and make declarations. It is used to give warnings, suggestions, and commands.

Examples:

The earth is round.
The sky is blue.
I take the bus to work.
He is tall.
She looks beautiful.
New York has many buildings.
I want a new car.
I need a drink of water.
I like Japanese food.
Don't walk on the grass!
Finish your homework!
Stop!

The simple present tense is used to indicate ongoing or regular activities, often with the addition of time markers, or **adverbs of frequency**, such as **never**, **sometimes**, **seldom**, **usually**, and **always**.

Examples:

School opens at nine a.m., Monday through Friday.
I get up at seven o'clock every morning.
I eat breakfast at 8:30.
I always brush my teeth in the morning and evening.
I usually exercise a few days a week.
I never go to the gym.

Auxiliary or helper verbs

The most common verbs in English are **to be**, **to have**, **to get**, **to make**, **to like**, **to want**, and **to need**. These auxiliary verbs are used with the main [verb](#) in the simple present tense to form a negative or a question.

Examples:

Does Kathy **write** all her own reports?
The teachers **have not finished** all the grade reports yet.
My father **has** never **visited** the United States.

Except with the verb **to be**, negative statements in the present tense are formed using the helping verb **do/does + not + the main verb** in its base form.

Examples:

She **does not like** milk.

Does she **like** milk?

Contractions

A contraction merges a subject and verb into a single word, such as **I'm** instead of **I am**, or **don't** instead of **do not**. When these words are written, an apostrophe indicates the dropped letter, which is normally a vowel. Contractions are considered less formal, more casual speech, which is probably the reason Americans in particular use them so often.

He isn't tall.

I don't like German cars.

That's beautiful.

Let's go swimming.

You mustn't say that.

Remember: The English language as spoken today has developed over hundreds of years. Spelling has changed, the meanings of words have changed, and some words have dropped out of the common vocabulary. That's why Shakespeare's plays can be more difficult to understand now than when they were first performed.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE

The present continuous tense usually describes something that is happening now and continuing to some unknown point in the future. It is formed by using the helping verb **to be** (am, is, are) **+ the main verb + ing**.

Examples:

He is sleeping.

She is going to the store.

I am studying English.

He is not speaking English.

She is not going to school this year.

They are not studying tonight.

Are you studying?

Are you drinking tea or coffee?

Am I annoying you?

I'm studying.
She's leaving home.
They're talking too much.

Question words or WH questions (who, what, where, when, why, which, how, how many, etc.):

What language is he speaking?
Where is she going?
Who is studying with you?
How many cars do you own?

STATIC VERBS

These are verbs that have to do with:

Emotion (love, hate, want, need)
Possession (have, own, want, belong)
Sense (see, hear, smell, seem)
Thought (know, believe, remember)

These usually *cannot* be used in the present continuous tense.

I love him. NOT I am loving him.
I own a car. NOT I am owning a car.
I hear music. NOT I am hearing music.
I believe in ghosts. NOT I am believing in ghosts.

Some stative verbs can also be used as action verbs.

I think you made a mistake. (think = believe)
I am thinking about my mother now. (think = mental process)
I have two motorcycles. (have = possess, own)
I am having lunch now. (have lunch/dinner = eat)

CLASS ACTIVITY: PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE

It is often easiest to understand an action when we see it being done. For this exercise, select two or more students.

Teacher to Student 1: "Please stand up."
(Student 1 stands up.)
"What are you doing?"

Student 1: "I am standing up."

Teacher to Student 2: "What is he doing?"

Student 2: "He is standing up."

Teacher to Student 1: "Write your name on the whiteboard."
(As student does so) "What are you doing?"

Student 1: "I am writing my name on the whiteboard."

Teacher to Student 2: "What is he doing?"
Student 2: "He is writing his name on the whiteboard."

Repeat this exercise with other students and other activities until you are sure the class understands the speech patterns: Open the door, close the window, turn on the lights, turn off the lights, sit down, give me the book, give her your pen. Follow each command with the same basic question, which will vary depending on who is asked: What are you doing? What is he doing?

Now vary the questions.

For example: "Please write your name on the whiteboard."
"Who is writing his name?"
"Are you writing your name?"
"Where are you writing your name?"
"Am I writing my name on the whiteboard?"

As the students answer the questions, stop to correct any mistakes or clear up anything causing confusion. Slow down the pace if necessary. Speed up the pace if necessary. You may want to write any questions that emerge on the whiteboard.

Once the students seem comfortable with this exercise, ask a good student (or a volunteer) to play the teacher—to give the commands and ask the questions.

CLASS ACTIVITY: PRESENT TENSE VERSUS PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE

This exercise might be a little difficult at first, but with repeated practice, the students will learn to differentiate the tenses, to understand the difference, and how to answer correctly.

Teacher: "Do you speak Japanese?"
Student 1: "Yes, I do."

Teacher: "Are you speaking Japanese now?"
Student 1: "No, I'm not."
Teacher: "What language are you speaking now?"

Student 1: "I'm speaking English."

Teacher to Student 2: "Do you drink tea?"

Student 2: "Yes, I do."

Teacher: "Are you drinking tea now?"

Student 2: "No, I'm not."

CONSIDER

Choose other verbs and prepare a script for each as above. Not every verb works for this exercise.