

Explanations

Basic contrasts: present simple and present continuous

Present simple generally refers to:

Facts that are always true

*Water **boils** at 100 degrees Celsius.*

Habits

*British people **drink** a lot of tea.*

States

*I **don't like** gangster films.*

Present continuous (progressive) generally refers to actions which are in progress at the moment. These can be temporary:

*I'm **staying** in a hotel until I find a flat.*

They can be actually in progress:

*The dog **is sleeping** on our bed!*

Or they can be generally in progress but not actually happening at the moment:

*I'm **learning** to drive.*

State verbs and event (action or dynamic) verbs

State verbs describe a continuing state, so do not usually have a continuous form. Typical examples are:

believe, belong, consist, contain, doubt, fit, have, know, like, love, matter, mean, need, own, prefer, seem, suppose, suspect, understand, want, wish

Some verbs have a stative meaning and a different active meaning. Typical examples are:

be, depend, feel, have, measure, see, taste, think, weigh

Compare these uses:

State

*Jack **is** noisy.*

*Deirdre **has** a Porsche.*

*I **think** I like you!*

*This fish **tastes** awful!*

*I **feel** that you are wrong.*

*This bag **weighs** a ton!*

*It **depends** what you mean.*

Event

*Jill's **being** noisy.*

*We're **having** an interesting conversation!*

*David's **thinking** about getting a new job.*

*I'm just **tasting** the soup.*

*I'm **feeling** terrible.*

*We're **weighing** the baby.*

*Bill, I'm **depending** on you to win this contract for us.*

The differences here apply to all verb forms, not just to present verb forms.

Other uses of
present
continuous

Temporary situations

*Are you **enjoying** your stay here?*

Repeated actions

*My car has broken down, so I **am walking** to work these days.*

Complaints about annoying habits

*You **are** always **making snide remarks** about my cooking!*

Other possible adverbs are: *constantly, continually, forever*

With verbs describing change and development

*The weather **is getting** worse!*

*More and more people **are giving up** smoking.*

Other uses of
present simple

Making declarations

Verbs describing opinions and feelings tend to be state verbs.

*I **hope** you'll come to my party.*

*I bet you **don't know** the answer!*

*I hereby **declare** this hospital open!*

Headlines

These are written in a 'telegram' style, and references to the past are usually simplified to present simple.

*Ship **sinks** in midnight collision.*

Instructions and itineraries

Instructions and recipes can be written in present simple instead of in imperative forms. This style is more personal.

*First you **roll out** the pastry.*

Itineraries are descriptions of travel arrangements.

*On day three we **visit** Stratford-upon-Avon.*

Summaries of events

Plots of stories, films etc, and summaries of historical events use present (and present perfect) verb forms.

*May 1945: The war in Europe **conies** to an end.*

*...At the end of the play both families **realise** that their hatred caused the deaths of the lovers ...*

'Historic present' in narrative and funny stories

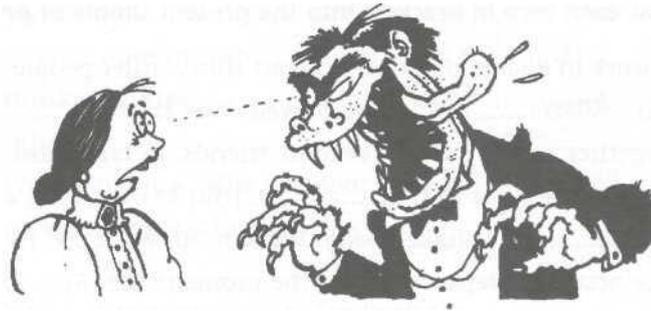
In informal speech, it is possible to use what we call the 'historic present' to describe past events, especially to make the narration seem more immediate and dramatic.

*... So then the second man **asks** the first one why he has a banana in his ear and the first one says ...*

Practice

1 Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

- I haven't decided yet about whether to buy a new car or a second-hand one. But / *think about it*/*I'm thinking about it*.
- All right, you try to fix the television! But / *hope*/*I'm hoping* you know what you're doing.
- Every year / *visit*/*I'm visiting* Britain to improve my English.
- It's time we turned on the central heating. *It gets*/*It's getting* colder every day.
- Of course, you're Mary, aren't you! / *recognise*/*I am recognising* you now.
- The film of 'War and Peace' is very long. *It lasts*/*It is lasting* over four hours.
- I can see from what you say that your mornings are very busy! But what *do you do*/*are you doing* in the afternoons?
- I'm going to buy a new swimming costume. My old one *doesn't fit*/*isn't fitting* any more,
- That must be the end of the first part of the performance. What *happens*/*is happening* now?
- What's the matter? Why *do you look*/*are you looking* at me like that?



2 Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

- I work in this office *all this year*/*all the time*.
- Emerson is *currently*/*for long* top of the driver's league.
- I am not making much money *these days*/*so far this year*.
- The food tastes even worse *now*/*presently*. You've put too much salt in.
- Normally*/*previously* we get in touch with customers by post.
- Pete was ill but he is getting over his illness *soon*/*now*.
- I'm feeling rather run down *lately*/*at present*, doctor,
- I always stay on duty *since*/*until* six o'clock.
- I'm *often*/*forever* picking your hairs out of the bath!
- Fortunately the baby *now*/*recently* sleeps all night.

Put each verb in brackets into the present simple or present continuous.

- a) hear..... (hear) that you have been promoted. Congratulations!
- b) British people.....(drink) more and more wine, apparently.
- c) I hope Sarah will be here soon. I.....(depend) on her.
- d) Please be quiet, David. You.....(forever/interrupt).
- e) Hey, you! What.....(you/think) you're doing?
- f) Could you come here please? I.....(want) to talk to you now.
- g) Jane is away on holiday so Linda.....(handle) her work.
- h) To be honest, I.....(doubt) whether Jim will be here next week.
- i) You've only just started the job, haven't you? How.....(you/get on)?
- j) Pay no attention to Graham. He.....(just/be) sarcastic.

4 Put each verb in brackets into the present simple or present continuous.

I work in a large office with about thirty other people, most of whom I (1) know..... (know) quite well. We (2).....(spend) most of the day together, so we have all become friends. In fact, most of my colleagues are so interesting, that I (3).....(think) of writing a book about them! (4).....(take) Helen Watson, for example. Helen (5).....(run) the accounts department. At the moment she (6).....(go out) with Keith Ballantine, one of the sales representatives, and they (7).....(seem) very happy together. But everyone - except Helen apparently - (8).....(know) that Keith (9).....(fancy) Susan Porter. But I (10).....(happen) to know that Susan (11).....(dislike) Keith. 'I can't stand people who never (12).....(stop) apologising all the time!' she told me. 'And besides, I know he (13).....(deceive) poor Helen. He (14).....(see) Betty Wills from the overseas department.' And plenty of other interesting things (15).....(currently/go on). For instance, every week we (16).....(experience) more and more problems with theft - personal belongings and even money have been stolen. When you (17).....(realise) that someone in your office is a thief, it (18).....(upset) you at first. But I (19).....(also/try) to catch whoever it is before the police are called in. I'm not going to tell you who I (20).....(suspect). Well, not yet anyway!

- 5 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using one of the words in **bold**. Do not change the word in **bold**.
- a) Charles and his father are exactly alike in appearance.
looks/looking
 Charles *looks just/exactly like* his father.
- b) Take all your possessions and walk slowly to the exit.
belongs/belonging
 Take everything and walk slowly to the exit.
- c) I'm finding it really enjoyable to work here.
enjoy/enjoying
 I here.
- d) I take work home regularly because of my new responsibility at work.
means/meaning
 My new responsibility at work work home regularly.
- e) In my cycling group there's George, Tom, Harry and me.
consists/consisting
 My George, Tom, Harry and me.
- f) In your opinion, who's going to win the Cup?
think/thinking
 Who do win the Cup?
- g) I'm seeing how wide the door is.
measure/measuring
 I the door.
- h) Neil always forgets his wife's birthday.
remembers/remembering
 Neil his wife's birthday.
- i) Its ability to catch fish is the key to the polar bear's survival.
depends/depending
 The polar bear's to catch fish.
- j) What's on your mind at the moment?
think/thinking
 What at the moment?

6 Most of these sentences contain an error. Where there is an error, rewrite the sentence correctly.

- a) I'm depending on you, so don't make any mistakes! (no errors)
- b) Is this total including the new students?
Does this total include the new students?
- c) Excuse me, but do you wait for somebody?
- d) These potatoes are tasting a bit funny.
- e) How are you feeling today?
- f) I look forward to hearing from you.
- g) I have a feeling that something goes wrong.
- h) What's that you're eating?
- i) Are you hearing anything from Wendy these days?
- j) I think you're being rather mean about this.

7 Complete the expressions using the words from the box.

coming	making	trying	asking	taking	shooting
talking	listening				

- a) I'm *trying*..... to concentrate.
- b) Are you.....off now, or can we talk?
- c) Go on, I'm.....
- d) I think we're..... at cross purposes.
- e) You're.....for trouble.
- f) It's.....along nicely.
- g) You don't seem to be..... much interest.
- h) You're.....a fuss about nothing.

Which expression means one of the following?

- 1 Are you in a hurry to leave?
- 2 We're talking about different things without realising it.
- 3 If you say or do this you will get into difficulties.