

Present Continuous - Use

When do we use the present continuous tense in English?

Note: This is also called the **present progressive** tense.

We use the present continuous for:

1. Actions that are happening at the moment of speaking

For example:

- I'm **eating** lunch now.
- The dog **is barking** loudly.
- It's **raining** outside.
- We're **not using** the computer.
- **Are you working** right now?
- What **are** they **doing** in the kitchen?

2. Temporary actions, situations or habits

Note: The action might not be happening exactly at the moment of speaking.

For example:

- I'm **working** at a café until I find a full-time job.
- You're **spending** too much time on your phone these days.
- We're **watching** an interesting series at the moment.
- Ethel's **not going** to the gym much lately.
- **Are** they **studying** Spanish this semester?
- Where **are** you **living** at the moment?

3. Trends or changing situations

For example:

- I'm **listening** to more podcasts now.
- Your English **is improving**.
- More people **are using** electric cars.
- The economy **is not getting better**.
- **Is** the price of gold **increasing**?
- Why **are** children **spending** more time inside?

4. Things that happen frequently that are usually* negative or annoying

Note: Here we use adverbs like "**always**", "**constantly**" or "**forever**". It is also usually possible to use the present simple for these things, but the present continuous emphasises the frequent nature of the action.

For example:

- You're always **leaving** the window open.
- Frank **is** forever **complaining**.
- George **is** always **trying** to help people. (*Here it is something positive.)
- Why **are** we constantly **getting** spam emails?

5. Narration (stories and jokes) and commentary

Note: We also use other tenses for narration and commentary, such as the present simple.

For example:

- She waits for him in the bar. It's **raining** outside.
- Johnson takes the ball and now he **is running** across the field.

6. Actions in a scene or picture

For example:

- In the photo, the women **are wearing** uniforms.
- The man in the painting **is looking** at his dog.

7. Fixed future plans or arrangements

Note: These are plans that we have already made. In these sentences you need to use a time word or phrase, like "tomorrow", "at 5pm", "on Monday", "next year", "when", etc.

For example:

- She's **going** to Brazil next year.
- We're **meeting** on Friday after work.
- I'm **not playing** tennis tomorrow.
- **Are** you **seeing** your doctor next week?
- When **is he visiting** his family?