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?

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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: It is also usually possible to use the present simple for these things, but the present continuous emphasises the frequent nature of the action.

Here we need an adverb like ***always***, ***constantly*** or ***forever***.

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.

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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.

Words and phrases that are commonly used in these sentences: ***tomorrow***, ***at [time of day]***, ***on [day]***, ***next [period of time]***, ***when***

For example:

- She**'s seeing** her doctor at 3 pm today.
- We**'re meeting** on Friday after work.
- I**'m not playing** tennis tomorrow.
- **Are** you **going** to Brazil next year?
- When **is** he **visiting** his family?

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