

Present Continuous, Be Going To or Present Simple

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

Present Continuous, Be Going To or Present Simple

When do we use **Present Continuous**, **be going to**, or **Present Simple**? These three forms can all talk about the present or the future, but we use them in different situations. In this lesson, we will learn exactly when to use each one — with simple stories, clear rules, and helpful tables.

Let's meet **Sam** and **Lisa**. They are friends. We will use their lives to understand the three forms.

What Are These Three Forms?

Before we look at the rules, let's see a quick example of each form:

- **Present Continuous:** *Sam is eating lunch right now.*
- **Be Going To:** *Lisa is going to visit her grandmother tomorrow.*
- **Present Simple:** *The train leaves at 8 o'clock every morning.*

Each sentence has a different meaning. Don't worry — we will explain everything step by step!

Form 1: Present Continuous

What is the Present Continuous?

We use the **Present Continuous** to talk about something that is happening **right now**, at this moment. It is also used for something that is happening **around this time** (this week, these days), even if not at the exact second of speaking.

Think of Sam. It is 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Sam is sitting at a table with a sandwich. You ask: "What is Sam doing?" The answer is:

Sam **is eating** a sandwich.

The action is happening NOW. This is the Present Continuous.

How Do We Form the Present Continuous?

Subject + am / is / are + verb-ing

I **am** working.

You **are** working.

He / She / It **is** working.

We / You / They **are** working.

Subject	Form	Example
I	am + verb-ing	I am reading a book.
You	are + verb-ing	You are studying English.
He / She / It	is + verb-ing	She is cooking dinner.
We / You / They	are + verb-ing	They are playing football.

When Do We Use the Present Continuous?

1. Actions happening right now (at this moment):

Lisa **is talking** on the phone. (She is on the phone at this exact moment.)

2. Actions happening around now (but maybe not at this exact second):

Sam **is learning** to drive this month. (He has lessons this month, not necessarily right now.)

3. Future arrangements — a plan that is already organised:

Lisa **is meeting** her friend on Saturday. (She has already arranged this — for example, she has sent a message and her friend agreed.)

Time Words Often Used with Present Continuous

- right now
- at the moment
- now
- today
- this week / this month / this year
- tonight (when it is a fixed arrangement)

Form 2: Be Going To

What is Be Going To?

We use **be going to** to talk about plans and intentions — things we have **decided to do** in the future. We have already thought about them. We also use **be going to** when we can see something is about to happen because of what we see right now.

Think of Lisa. She looked at her calendar last week. She wrote: "Visit Grandma – Sunday." She has made a decision. Now she says:

*I **am going to visit** my grandmother on Sunday.*

This is a plan she decided before. This is **be going to**.

How Do We Form Be Going To?

Subject + am / is / are + going to + verb (base form)

I **am going to** travel.

You **are going to** travel.

He / She / It **is going to** travel.

We / You / They **are going to** travel.

Subject	Form	Example
I	am going to + verb	I am going to buy a new phone.
You	are going to + verb	You are going to love this film.
He / She / It	is going to + verb	He is going to start a new job.
We / You / They	are going to + verb	They are going to move to London.

When Do We Use Be Going To?

1. A plan or intention (a decision made before now):

Sam **is going to study** medicine at university. (He has already decided this.)

2. A prediction based on what we can see (evidence):

Look at those dark clouds! It **is going to rain**. (We can see the clouds — this is the evidence.)

Be careful! You **are going to drop** that glass! (I can see the glass is almost falling.)

Time Words Often Used with Be Going To

- tomorrow
- next week / next month / next year
- soon
- in the future
- this weekend (when it is a personal plan)

Form 3: Present Simple

What is the Present Simple?

We use the **Present Simple** to talk about things that are always true, habits, and routines. We also use it for **fixed timetables and schedules** — for example, transport, cinema times, or lesson times.

Think of Sam's morning routine. Every day:

- He wakes up at 7 a.m.
- He has breakfast.
- He catches the 8 o'clock train.

These things happen **every day**. This is the Present Simple.

Sam **catches** the 8 o'clock train every morning.

How Do We Form the Present Simple?

Subject + verb (base form) — Add -s or -es for he / she / it

I **work**.

You **work**.

He / She / It **works**.

We / You / They **work**.

Subject	Form	Example
I	verb (base form)	I start work at 9 a.m.
You	verb (base form)	You finish at 5 p.m.
He / She / It	verb + -s / -es	The film starts at 7 o'clock.
We / You / They	verb (base form)	Trains leave every hour.

When Do We Use the Present Simple?

1. Habits and routines:

Lisa **goes** to the gym every Monday. (This is her regular habit.)

2. Facts and things that are always true:

Water **boils** at 100 degrees. (This is always true.)

3. Fixed timetables and schedules (for transport, cinema, events, etc.):

The next bus **leaves** at half past four. (This is the official timetable.)

The concert **starts** at 8 p.m. (This is a scheduled event time.)

Time Words Often Used with Present Simple

- every day / every week / every morning
- always / usually / often / sometimes / never
- on Mondays / on weekends
- at (a specific time) — e.g. at 8 o'clock
- in the morning / in the evening

Comparing All Three Forms

Here is a helpful table to see all three forms side by side:

Form	When to Use It	Example
Present Continuous	Action happening NOW or around now; future arrangement (already organised)	Sam is studying at the moment. / We are having a party on Friday.

Form	When to Use It	Example
Be Going To	Future plan / intention (decided before now); prediction with evidence	Lisa is going to learn Spanish next year. / It is going to rain .
Present Simple	Habit / routine; fact; fixed timetable or schedule	Sam drinks coffee every morning. / The train leaves at 9.

Important Differences and Special Cases

Present Continuous vs Be Going To (Future Plans)

Both of these can talk about the future. The difference is small but important at A2 level:

Present Continuous is used for a future arrangement that has been **organised with another person** — like a meeting or appointment.

*I **am seeing** the doctor at 3 p.m. (I have an appointment. It is in the calendar.)*

Be Going To is used for a personal plan or intention — you have **decided** to do something, but it may not yet be arranged with someone else.

*I **am going to eat** more vegetables. (I have decided this. It is my intention.)*

Good news: In everyday English, especially at A2 level, both forms are often accepted for future plans. Focus on the main differences first!

Be Going To vs Present Simple (for the Future)

Use **Present Simple** for schedules and timetables — official times that don't change:

*The shop **opens** at 9 a.m. (This is the official opening time.)*

Use **be going to** for personal plans and decisions:

*I **am going to go** to the shop at 9 a.m. (This is my plan.)*

Stative Verbs — Important!

Some verbs are called **stative verbs**. This means they describe a state (a feeling or a situation), not an action. We do **not** usually use these verbs in the Present Continuous — we use the Present Simple instead.

Common stative verbs include: **know, like, love, hate, want, need, believe, understand, seem, have (= possess)**.

✗ *I am knowing the answer.*

✓ **I know** the answer.

✗ *She is wanting a coffee.*

✓ **She wants** a coffee.

Common Mistakes

✗ *I am going to visiting Paris next summer.*

✓ **I am going to visit** Paris next summer. (After *going to*, use the base form of the verb — no -ing!)

✗ *Look! He falls!*

✓ **Look! He is falling!** (Something happening right now — use Present Continuous.)

✗ *The train is leaving at 9 a.m. every day.*

✓ **The train leaves** at 9 a.m. every day. (A regular timetable — use Present Simple.)

✗ *I am loving chocolate ice cream.*

✓ **I love** chocolate ice cream. (Love is a stative verb — use Present Simple.)

✗ *Sam is go to study tomorrow.*

✓ **Sam is going to study** tomorrow. (Don't forget *going to* — not just *is go to*.)

✗ *She work at the moment.*

✓ **She is working** at the moment. (Use *am/is/are + verb-ing* for actions happening now.)

Negative and Question Forms

Negatives

Present Continuous (negative):

Subject + **am not / isn't / aren't** + verb-ing

*Sam **isn't working** right now. He is having lunch.*

Be Going To (negative):

Subject + **am not / isn't / aren't** + going to + verb

*I **am not going to watch** TV tonight. I am going to read.*

Present Simple (negative):

Subject + **don't / doesn't** + verb

*The bus **doesn't leave** until 10 o'clock.*

Questions

Present Continuous (question):

Am / Is / Are + subject + verb-ing?

***Is** Lisa **studying** right now? Yes, she is.*

Be Going To (question):

Am / Is / Are + subject + going to + verb?

***Are** you **going to cook** dinner tonight? No, I am not.*

Present Simple (question):

Do / Does + subject + verb?

***Does** the film **start** at 8? Yes, it does.*

Present Continuous, Be Going To or Present Simple: Quick Summary

Let's look at the key points from this lesson:

- Use **Present Continuous** (am/is/are + verb-ing) for actions happening **now**, around now, or for **arranged future plans**.
- Use **Be Going To** (am/is/are + going to + verb) for **future intentions and plans** you have already decided, and for **predictions with evidence**.
- Use **Present Simple** (verb / verb-s) for **habits, routines, facts**, and **fixed timetables**.
- After *going to*, always use the **base form** of the verb (no -ing!).
- Stative verbs (like *know, love, want*) are **not** used in the Present Continuous — use Present Simple instead.
- Look for **time words** — they can help you choose the right form!

Now practise **Present Continuous, Be Going To and Present Simple** in the exercises below.

Present Continuous, Be Going To or Present Simple – Practice Test

A2 | 30 Questions: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Gap & Fill-in-the-Blank

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 Look! The children ____ in the garden right now.

- A** play
- B** are playing
- C** going to play
- D** plays

2 The train ____ at 9:00 every morning.

- A** is leaving
- B** are leaving
- C** leaves
- D** going to leave

3 We ____ visit our grandparents next weekend. We already have the tickets.

- A** are going to
- B** visit
- C** visits
- D** are visit

4 Listen! She ____ a beautiful song.

- A** sings
- B** is singing
- C** going to sing
- D** sing

5 My brother ____ English every day after school.

- A** is studying
- B** are studying
- C** studies
- D** going to study

6 It's very cloudy. I think it ____ rain soon.

- A** rains
- B** is raining
- C** is going to
- D** going to

7 They ____ a new house next year. They have already chosen it.

- A** buy
- B** are going to buy
- C** is going to buy
- D** buys

8 Please be quiet! The baby ____.

- A** sleeps
- B** is sleeping
- C** going to sleep
- D** are sleeping

9 The museum ____ at 10 o'clock on Saturdays.

- A** is opening
- B** are opening
- C** going to open
- D** opens

10 I can't talk right now. I ____ dinner.

- A** am cooking
- B** cook
- C** going to cook
- D** cooks

Part 2: Fill in the Gap (Questions 11–20)

11 Look! The children ____ in the garden right now.

- A** are playing
- B** play
- C** are going to play

12 We ____ visit our grandparents next weekend. We already have the tickets.

- A** are going to
- B** are visiting
- C** visit

13 The train ____ at 8:15 every morning.

- A** leaves
- B** is leaving
- C** is going to leave

14 She ____ a new dress for the party tonight. She already bought the fabric.

- A** is going to make
- B** makes
- C** is making

15 Please be quiet! The baby ____ right now.

- A** is sleeping
- B** sleeps
- C** is going to sleep

16 My dad ____ to work by bus every day.

- A** goes
- B** is going
- C** is going to go

17 They ____ a new house. They signed the contract yesterday.

- A** are going to buy
- B** are buying
- C** buy

18 I can't talk now. I ____ dinner at the moment.

- A** am cooking
- B** cook
- C** am going to cook

19 The museum ____ at nine o'clock and closes at five.

- A** opens
- B** is opening
- C** is going to open

20 Look at those dark clouds! It ____ rain.

- A** is going to
- B** is raining
- C** rains

Part 3: Fill in the Blank (Questions 21–30)

21 Look! The children _____ in the garden right now.

22 She _____ her grandmother next weekend. She already bought the bus ticket.

23 The train _____ at 8:15 every morning.

24 Listen! Someone _____ on the door.

25 We _____ a new car. We found a great one at the shop.

26 My dad _____ in a hospital. He is a doctor.

27 Hurry up! The film _____ in five minutes.

28 They _____ TV at the moment. They are doing their homework.

29 Maria _____ French next year. She signed up for a course.

30 Tom usually _____ at seven o'clock on weekdays.

Answer Key & Explanations

Present Continuous, Be Going To or Present Simple | A2

Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **B** Correct Answer: are playing ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening right now. The word Look! tells us the action is happening at this moment. The children are playing in the garden right now.
2. **C** Correct Answer: leaves ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for schedules and routines. The phrase every morning tells us this is a regular, fixed event. The train leaves at 9:00 every morning.
3. **A** Correct Answer: are going to ✓ Explanation: We use be going to for plans decided before now. The sentence says we already have the tickets, which shows it is a planned event. We are going to visit our grandparents next weekend.
4. **B** Correct Answer: is singing ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening at this moment. The word Listen! is a signal that the action is happening right now. She is singing a beautiful song.
5. **C** Correct Answer: studies ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for habits and routines. The phrase every day is a signal for a regular habit. My brother studies English every day after school.
6. **C** Correct Answer: is going to ✓ Explanation: We use be going to when we can see signs that something will happen. The cloud in the sky is a sign of future rain. It is going to rain soon.
7. **B** Correct Answer: are going to buy ✓ Explanation: We use be going to for future plans already decided. The sentence says they have already chosen it, which shows the plan is made. They are going to buy a new house next year.
8. **B** Correct Answer: is sleeping ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for something happening right now. The phrase Please be quiet! tells us the baby is sleeping at this moment. The baby is sleeping.
9. **D** Correct Answer: opens ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for timetables and fixed schedules. When we talk about official opening times, we use Present Simple. The museum opens at 10 o'clock on Saturdays.
10. **A** Correct Answer: am cooking ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for an action happening at the moment of speaking. The phrase right now is a signal for Present Continuous. I am cooking dinner.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: are playing ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for actions happening right now. The word Look! tells us the action is happening at this moment. The children are playing in the garden right now.
12. **A** Correct Answer: are going to ✓ Explanation: We use be going to for plans or intentions decided before speaking. Having tickets shows it is a planned decision. We are going to visit our grandparents next weekend.
13. **A** Correct Answer: leaves ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for schedules and timetables. The phrase every morning signals a fixed, regular event. The train leaves at 8:15 every morning.
14. **A** Correct Answer: is going to make ✓ Explanation: We use be going to for a future plan or intention. Buying the fabric shows the decision was made in advance. She is going to make a new dress for the party tonight.
15. **A** Correct Answer: is sleeping ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for something happening at this moment. Right now and Please be quiet! show the action is in progress now. The baby is sleeping right now.
16. **A** Correct Answer: goes ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for habits and routines. The phrase every day is a key signal for a regular action. My dad goes to work by bus every day.
17. **A** Correct Answer: are going to buy ✓ Explanation: We use be going to for a definite future plan. Signing the contract shows the decision is already made. They are going to buy a new house.
18. **A** Correct Answer: am cooking ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for actions happening at the moment of speaking. The phrase at the moment is a clear signal. I am cooking dinner at the moment.
19. **A** Correct Answer: opens ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for fixed schedules and official times. Opening and closing times of places are regular facts. The museum opens at nine o'clock.
20. **A** Correct Answer: is going to ✓ Explanation: We use be going to when we can see evidence that something will happen soon. The dark clouds are the evidence that rain is coming. It is going to rain.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **are playing** Correct Answer: are playing ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening right now. The word Look! is a signal that the action is happening at this moment. The children are playing.
22. **is going to visit** Correct Answer: is going to visit ✓ Explanation: We use be going to for a planned future action. She already bought the ticket, so this is a definite plan. She is going to visit her grandmother.

23. **leaves** Correct Answer: leaves ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for schedules and timetables. This is a fixed, regular time. The train leaves at 8:15.
24. **is knocking** Correct Answer: is knocking ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening at this moment. The word Listen! tells us it is happening now. Someone is knocking on the door.
25. **are going to buy** Correct Answer: are going to buy ✓ Explanation: We use be going to for a future plan or intention. They already found the car, so the plan is decided. We are going to buy a new car.
26. **works** Correct Answer: works ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for facts and habits. Being a doctor is a permanent fact, not a temporary action. My dad works in a hospital.
27. **is starting|starts** Correct Answer: is starting / starts ✓ Explanation: Both Present Continuous and Present Simple can be used for scheduled future events happening very soon. The film is starting / starts in five minutes.
28. **are not watching|aren't watching** Correct Answer: are not watching / aren't watching ✓ Explanation: We use the negative Present Continuous for something not happening right now. The phrase at the moment confirms this. They are not watching TV.
29. **is going to study** Correct Answer: is going to study ✓ Explanation: We use be going to when someone has already made a plan or decision. She signed up, so the plan is definite. Maria is going to study French.
30. **gets up** Correct Answer: gets up ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for routines and habits. The word usually is a key signal for a repeated action. Tom usually gets up at seven o'clock.

Score Guide

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 27–30 Correct | Excellent! You have mastered this topic. |
| 23–26 Correct | Very good! Review the rules you missed. |
| 18–22 Correct | Good start. Re-read the lesson and examples. |
| 0–17 Correct | Study the lesson again before retaking the test. |