

Present Simple and Present Continuous - Summary

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

Present Simple and Present Continuous – Summary

The **present simple** and the **present continuous** are two of the most important tenses in English. At B1 level, it is essential to understand not just how to form them, but also *when* and *why* we use each one. This lesson is a complete summary of both tenses — their forms, their uses, and the key differences between them.

Let's start with a quick example to show the difference:

"Maria **works** in a hospital. She **is working** in the emergency ward today."

Both sentences are about Maria and the present, but they tell us something different. Read on to find out exactly why!

Part 1: Present Simple – Form

We use the **present simple** to talk about things that are generally true, habits, routines, and facts.

Positive Sentences

For most subjects, we use the **base form** of the verb. For **he / she / it**, we add **-s** or **-es** to the verb.

Subject	Verb Form	Example
I	base form	I work every day.
You	base form	You play football.
He / She / It	base form + -s / -es	She works hard. He watches TV.
We	base form	We live in London.
They	base form	They study English.

Spelling Rules for He / She / It

- Most verbs: add **-s** → *work* → *works*, *play* → *plays*
- Verbs ending in **-s, -sh, -ch, -x, -o**: add **-es** → *watch* → *watches*, *go* → *goes*
- Verbs ending in **consonant + y**: change **y** → **ies** → *study* → *studies*, *carry* → *carries*
- Verbs ending in **vowel + y**: just add **-s** → *play* → *plays*, *enjoy* → *enjoys*

Negative Sentences

Use **do not (don't)** or **does not (doesn't)** + the base form of the verb.

Subject	Negative Form	Example
I / You / We / They	don't + base verb	I don't like coffee.
He / She / It	doesn't + base verb	She doesn't work on Sundays.

Questions

Use **Do** or **Does** at the beginning of the question, followed by the subject and the base verb.

Subject	Question Form	Example
I / You / We / They	Do + subject + base verb?	Do you live near here?
He / She / It	Does + subject + base verb?	Does he play tennis?

Part 2: Present Simple – When Do We Use It?

Here are the main situations where we use the **present simple**:

1. Habits and Routines

Things we do regularly — every day, every week, often, never, etc.

*"I **get up** at seven o'clock every morning."*

*"She **goes** to the gym three times a week."*

2. General Truths and Facts

Things that are always or generally true.

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

*"The sun **rises** in the east."*

3. Permanent Situations

Situations that are long-lasting or permanent (not expected to change soon).

*"They **live** in Brazil."*

*"He **works** as an engineer."*

4. Likes, Dislikes, and Opinions

We use the present simple with verbs like *like, love, hate, prefer, think, believe*.

*"I **love** Italian food."*

*"She **doesn't like** loud music."*

Common Time Expressions with Present Simple

- always, usually, often, sometimes, rarely, never

- every day / every week / every morning
- on Mondays / at weekends / in the morning
- twice a week / once a month

Part 3: Present Continuous – Form

We use the **present continuous** to talk about things happening *now*, around now, or temporary situations.

The present continuous is formed with: **subject + am / is / are + verb-ing**

Positive Sentences

Subject	Form	Example
I	am + verb-ing	I am working now.
You	are + verb-ing	You are studying hard.
He / She / It	is + verb-ing	She is watching a film.
We	are + verb-ing	We are learning English.
They	are + verb-ing	They are playing in the garden.

Spelling Rules for -ing

- Most verbs: just add **-ing** → *work* → *working*, *play* → *playing*
- Verbs ending in a **single vowel + consonant** (short vowel sound): double the consonant → *run* → *running*, *sit* → *sitting*, *swim* → *swimming*
- Verbs ending in **-e**: remove the **-e** and add **-ing** → *make* → *making*, *write* → *writing*
- Verbs ending in **-ie**: change **ie** → **y** and add **-ing** → *lie* → *lying*, *die* → *dying*

Negative Sentences

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

Subject	Negative Form	Example
I	am not + verb-ing	I am not working now.
You / We / They	aren't + verb-ing	They aren't listening .
He / She / It	isn't + verb-ing	He isn't coming tonight.

Questions

Move **am / is / are** to the beginning of the question.

Subject	Question Form	Example
I	Am I + verb-ing?	Am I doing this correctly?
You / We / They	Are + subject + verb-ing?	Are you coming with us?
He / She / It	Is + subject + verb-ing?	Is she working late?

Part 4: Present Continuous – When Do We Use It?

Here are the main situations where we use the **present continuous**:

1. Things Happening Right Now

Actions that are in progress at this exact moment.

"She **is talking** on the phone."

"It **is raining** outside."

2. Temporary Situations

Situations that are happening around now but are not permanent.

"I **am staying** with my cousin this week."

"He **is working** from home at the moment."

3. Changing or Developing Situations

Situations that are in the process of changing.

"Prices **are rising** quickly."

"More people **are using** electric cars."

4. Fixed Future Plans and Arrangements

At B1 level, we also use the present continuous for personal arrangements in the near future.

"We **are meeting** Tom for dinner tonight."

"She **is flying** to Paris on Friday."

Common Time Expressions with Present Continuous

- now, right now, at the moment
- currently, today, this week, this month, this year
- at present, still
- tonight, on Friday (for future arrangements)
- Look! Listen! (to draw attention to something happening now)

Key Differences: Present Simple vs Present Continuous

This is the most important section! Both tenses refer to the present, but they have different meanings. Study the table carefully.

Present Simple	Present Continuous
Habits and routines	Actions happening right now
General truths and facts	Temporary situations
Permanent situations	Changing or developing situations
Likes, dislikes, opinions	Fixed personal arrangements (future)
"She works in a school."	"She is working from home this week."
"I usually walk to work."	"I am taking the bus today."
"He plays football every Saturday."	"He is playing football right now."

Stative Verbs – An Important Special Case

Some verbs in English are called **stative verbs** (also called *state verbs*). These verbs describe a *state* or condition — not an action. We **do not** normally use stative verbs in the continuous form, even when talking about right now.

Common stative verbs include:

- **Feelings and emotions:** like, love, hate, prefer, want, need, fear
- **Mental states:** know, believe, think (= have an opinion), understand, remember, forget
- **Senses:** see, hear, smell, taste, seem, appear
- **Possession:** have (= own), own, belong, possess
- **Other states:** be, contain, depend, include, mean

Examples:

✗ I am knowing the answer.

✓ I **know** the answer.

✗ She is wanting a new job.

✓ She **wants** a new job.

✗ He is having a car.

✓ He **has** a car.

Be Careful! Some Verbs Can Be Both

A few verbs can be stative or active depending on the meaning:

Verb	Stative Use (Present Simple)	Active Use (Present Continuous)
have	"I have a sister." (= own/possess)	"I am having lunch." (= eating)

Verb	Stative Use (Present Simple)	Active Use (Present Continuous)
think	"I think it's a good idea." (= believe/opinion)	"She is thinking about the problem." (= considering)
see	"I see a bird in the garden." (= perceive)	"I am seeing my dentist tomorrow." (= meeting)
smell	"The flowers smell beautiful." (= have a smell)	"She is smelling the flowers." (= sniffing)

Comparing Meanings: Side-by-Side Examples

Here are more examples to help you see the contrast clearly in real contexts.

Context	Present Simple	Present Continuous
Job / Work	"Lucas works in a bank."	"Lucas is working overtime this week."
Language	"She speaks French."	"She is learning German at the moment."
Transport	"I drive to work."	"Today I am taking the train."
Living	"They live in Manchester."	"They are staying in a hotel this week."
Reading	"He reads before bed."	"He is reading a great book right now."

Common Mistakes

These are the most common errors learners make with the present simple and present continuous. Check you don't make these mistakes!

Mistake 1: Using continuous with stative verbs

✗ I am knowing your teacher.

✓ I **know** your teacher.

✗ She is preferring tea to coffee.

✓ She **prefers** tea to coffee.

Mistake 2: Forgetting the -s with he / she / it in present simple

✗ He work in a restaurant.

✓ He **works** in a restaurant.

✗ She study every evening.

✓ She **studies** every evening.

Mistake 3: Using present simple for temporary situations

✗ I stay with my friend this month.

✓ I **am staying** with my friend this month.

✗ He works from home today (as a temporary situation).

✓ **He is working** from home today.

Mistake 4: Forgetting the auxiliary verb (am / is / are)

✗ She working right now.

✓ **She is working** right now.

✗ They playing football at the moment.

✓ **They are playing** football at the moment.

Mistake 5: Using present continuous with frequency adverbs

✗ I am usually taking the bus.

✓ **I usually take** the bus.

✗ She is never eating meat.

✓ **She never eats** meat.

Mistake 6: Using don't / doesn't with is / am / are

✗ She doesn't working today.

✓ **She isn't working** today.

✗ They don't playing right now.

✓ **They aren't playing** right now.

Contractions

In spoken and informal written English, we often use contractions. Here are the most common ones for both tenses:

Present Continuous Contractions

Full Form	Contraction	Example
I am working	I'm working	<i>I'm working from home today.</i>
She is reading	She's reading	<i>She's reading a novel.</i>
They are coming	They're coming	<i>They're coming to the party.</i>
He is not sleeping	He isn't sleeping	<i>He isn't sleeping well.</i>
We are not leaving	We aren't leaving	<i>We aren't leaving yet.</i>

Present Simple Contractions (Negatives)

Full Form	Contraction	Example
I do not like	I don't like	<i>I don't like spicy food.</i>
She does not work	She doesn't work	<i>She doesn't work on Fridays.</i>
They do not understand	They don't understand	<i>They don't understand the question.</i>

Present Simple and Present Continuous: Quick Summary

Present Simple – Use it for:

- Habits and routines ("I **get up** at 7am.")
- General truths and facts ("The earth **moves** around the sun.")
- Permanent situations ("She **lives** in Spain.")
- Likes, dislikes and opinions ("He **loves** jazz music.")
- Signal words: always, usually, often, sometimes, never, every day, on Mondays

Present Continuous – Use it for:

- Actions happening right now ("I **am writing** an email.")
- Temporary situations ("She **is living** with her parents at the moment.")
- Changing situations ("The weather **is getting** warmer.")
- Fixed future arrangements ("We **are meeting** tomorrow.")
- Signal words: now, right now, at the moment, currently, today, this week, still

Remember:

- Do **not** use stative verbs (like, want, know, understand, have = own) in the continuous form.
- Do **not** use frequency adverbs (always, usually, never) with the present continuous.
- He / She / It needs **-s or -es** in the present simple.
- All continuous forms need **am / is / are** + verb-ing.

Now practise **present simple and present continuous** in the exercises below.

Present Simple and Present Continuous - Summary – Practice Test

B1 | 30 Questions: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Gap & Fill-in-the-Blank

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 Listen! Someone ____ at the door right now.

- A** knock
- B** knocks
- C** is knocking
- D** knocked

2 He usually ____ coffee in the morning, but today he ____ tea.

- A** drink / is drinking
- B** drinks / is drinking
- C** is drinking / drinks
- D** drinks / drinks

3 I ____ to the gym every Monday and Wednesday.

- A** am going
- B** goes
- C** go
- D** am go

4 The Earth ____ around the Sun.

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

5 Why ____ you ____ your umbrella? It's not raining.

- A** are / carrying
- B** do / carrying
- C** are / carry
- D** do / carry

6 She ____ five languages fluently.

- A** is speaking
- B** speaks
- C** speaking
- D** speak

7 Please be quiet! The baby ____ in the next room.

- A** sleeps
- B** is sleeping
- C** sleep
- D** sleeping

8 Which sentence is CORRECT?

- A** I am knowing the answer.
- B** She is wanting a new car.
- C** They are playing football in the park.
- D** He is believing in ghosts.

9 Tom ____ in London, but this month he ____ in Paris for a project.

- A** lives / is working
- B** is living / works
- C** lives / works
- D** is living / is working

10 How often ____ she ____ her grandparents?

- A** is / visiting
- B** does / visits
- C** does / visit
- D** is / visit

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

11 She ____ to the gym every Monday morning.

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

12 Listen! The baby ____ in the next room.

- A** is crying
- B** cries
- C** cry

13 I ____ she is telling the truth.

- A** believe
- B** am believing
- C** believes

14 He ____ a new project this week, so he is very busy.

- A** is working on
- B** works on
- C** work on

15 Water ____ at 100 degrees Celsius.

- A** boils
- B** is boiling
- C** boil

16 They ____ dinner at the moment, so please don't call them.

- A** are having
- B** have
- C** has

17 My sister usually ____ the bus to work, but today she is driving.

- A** takes
- B** is taking
- C** take

18 Don't make noise — Dad ____ a nap on the sofa.

- A** is having
- B** has
- C** have

19 I ____ three languages: English, Spanish, and French.

- A** speak
- B** am speaking
- C** speaks

20 She ____ more and more confident as the course continues.

- A** is getting
- B** gets
- C** get

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

21 She _____ at a bank from Monday to Friday every week.

22 Listen! The children _____ in the garden right now.

23 Water _____ at 100 degrees Celsius.

24 I can't talk right now. I _____ lunch with my colleagues.

25 He _____ spicy food at all.

26 Look at Maria! She _____ a beautiful red dress today.

27 My parents usually _____ to the countryside at the weekend.

28 I _____ for my English exam this week because it is very important.

29 Does she _____ French fluently?

30 They _____ TV at the moment. They are playing a board game.

Answer Key & Explanations

Present Simple and Present Continuous - Summary | B1

Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **C** Correct Answer: is knocking ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for actions happening right now. The word Listen! signals that the action is happening at this moment. Someone is knocking at the door right now.
2. **B** Correct Answer: drinks / is drinking ✓ Explanation: Usually is a frequency adverb that signals a habit, so we use Present Simple (drinks). Today signals a temporary action happening now, so we use Present Continuous (is drinking).
3. **C** Correct Answer: go ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple to talk about regular habits or routines. The phrase every Monday and Wednesday shows this is a repeated activity. I go to the gym every Monday and Wednesday.
4. **B** Correct Answer: goes ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple to talk about permanent truths or scientific facts. The movement of the Earth around the Sun is always true. The Earth goes around the Sun.
5. **A** Correct Answer: are / carrying ✓ Explanation: To form a question in the Present Continuous, we use are/am/is + subject + verb-ing. The context suggests this is something happening right now in an unusual situation. Why are you carrying your umbrella?
6. **B** Correct Answer: speaks ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for permanent states or abilities. Speaking five languages is a general ability, not a temporary action. She speaks five languages fluently.
7. **B** Correct Answer: is sleeping ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for actions happening at the moment of speaking. The phrase Please be quiet! suggests the action is in progress right now. The baby is sleeping in the next room.
8. **C** Correct Answer: They are playing football in the park. ✓ Explanation: Stative verbs like know, want, and believe are not normally used in the continuous form. Action verbs like play can be used in the Present Continuous. They are playing football in the park. is correct.
9. **A** Correct Answer: lives / is working ✓ Explanation: Lives is in the Present Simple because London is his permanent home. Is working is in the Present Continuous because working in Paris is a temporary situation happening this month. Tom lives in London, but this month he is working in Paris.
10. **C** Correct Answer: does / visit ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for questions about habits and routines, especially with How often. The structure is does + subject + base verb. How often does she visit her grandparents?

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: goes ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for regular habits and routines. The phrase every Monday morning signals a routine. She goes to the gym every Monday morning.
12. **A** Correct Answer: is crying ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for actions happening right now. The word Listen! signals something is happening at this moment. The baby is crying right now.
13. **A** Correct Answer: believe ✓ Explanation: Stative verbs like believe describe mental states and are not normally used in the continuous form. We always use the Present Simple with them. I believe she is telling the truth.
14. **A** Correct Answer: is working on ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for temporary situations happening around now. The phrase this week shows it is a temporary activity. He is working on a new project this week.
15. **A** Correct Answer: boils ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple to talk about facts and scientific truths. This is always true and does not change. Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.
16. **A** Correct Answer: are having ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous for actions happening at the moment of speaking. The phrase at the moment is a key signal. They are having dinner at the moment.
17. **A** Correct Answer: takes ✓ Explanation: The adverb usually signals a regular habit, so we use the Present Simple. The second part of the sentence shows an exception with the Present Continuous. My sister usually takes the bus.
18. **A** Correct Answer: is having ✓ Explanation: Have can be used in the continuous form when it describes an activity (like having a nap). This is happening right now. Dad is having a nap on the sofa.
19. **A** Correct Answer: speak ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple to describe permanent abilities or states. Knowing a language is a permanent fact, not a temporary action. I speak three languages.
20. **A** Correct Answer: is getting ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Continuous to describe a changing or developing situation. The phrase more and more signals gradual change. She is getting more and more confident.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **works|is working** Correct Answer: works ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for regular routines and habits. She works at a bank every week describes a regular schedule, not something happening right now.
22. **are singing** Correct Answer: are singing ✓ Explanation: The word Listen! and the phrase right now are time signals for the Present Continuous. We use to be + verb-ing for actions happening at the moment of speaking.

23. **boils** Correct Answer: boils ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for facts and general truths. Water boils at 100 degrees is always true, so we do not use the continuous form.
24. **am having|'m having** Correct Answer: am having / 'm having ✓ Explanation: The phrase right now and the context of being interrupted tell us the action is in progress. We use the Present Continuous (am having) for something happening at this moment.
25. **doesn't like** Correct Answer: doesn't like ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple negative (doesn't + base verb) for permanent states and preferences. Like is a stative verb and is not usually used in the continuous form.
26. **is wearing** Correct Answer: is wearing ✓ Explanation: The word Look! and the time word today signal a temporary or current situation. We use the Present Continuous (is wearing) for things happening around now.
27. **go** Correct Answer: go ✓ Explanation: The adverb usually signals a repeated habit, so we use the Present Simple. Usually, always, often and never are common frequency adverbs used with Present Simple.
28. **am studying|'m studying** Correct Answer: am studying / 'm studying ✓ Explanation: The phrase this week shows a temporary activity around the present time. We use the Present Continuous for temporary situations that are in progress during a current period.
29. **speak** Correct Answer: speak ✓ Explanation: In Present Simple questions with does, we always use the base form of the verb (no -s, no -ing). Does she speak is the correct question form.
30. **are not watching|aren't watching** Correct Answer: are not watching / aren't watching ✓ Explanation: The phrase at the moment is a key signal for the Present Continuous. The negative form is to be + not + verb-ing. Aren't watching means the action is not in progress right now.

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. |