

Present Simple vs Present Continuous

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

Present Simple vs Present Continuous

In English, we use two important tenses to talk about the present: the **present simple** and the **present continuous**. They look similar, but we use them for different reasons.

Let's meet two friends: **Tom** and **Anna**.

"Tom works in a school. Right now, he is eating lunch."

The first sentence uses the **present simple**. The second sentence uses the **present continuous**. In this lesson, you will learn when to use each one and how to make them.

What Is the Present Simple?

We use the **present simple** to talk about:

- Things that are **always true** (facts)
- Things we do **every day** or **regularly** (habits and routines)

Think of the present simple as a timetable of your life — things you do again and again.

Present Simple Examples

Anna lives in London. (This is always true. It is a fact.)

She drinks coffee every morning. (She does this every day. It is a habit.)

Tom works in a school. (This is his job. It is always true.)

They eat dinner at 7 o'clock. (This happens every day. It is a routine.)

How to Make the Present Simple

For most subjects (**I, you, we, they**), just use the base verb:

Subject + base verb

I eat breakfast.

You work at home.

We live in Madrid.

They like cats.

For **he, she, it**, add **-s** or **-es** to the verb:

He / She / It + verb + -s/-es

He eats breakfast.

She works at home.

It rains a lot here.

Note: A **subject** is the person or thing doing the action. A **verb** is the action word (eat, work, live).

Present Simple: Positive, Negative, and Question

Form	I / You / We / They	He / She / It
Positive	I work.	She works.
Negative	I don't work.	She doesn't work.
Question	Do you work?	Does she work?

Note: **Don't** is short for **do not**. **Doesn't** is short for **does not**. These short forms are called **contractions**.

Common Time Words for Present Simple

These words often appear with the present simple:

- **every day** – *I walk to school every day.*
- **always** – *She always drinks tea.*
- **usually** – *We usually eat at home.*
- **often** – *He often reads books.*
- **sometimes** – *They sometimes watch TV.*
- **never** – *I never eat meat.*
- **on Mondays / at 8 o'clock** – *She works on Mondays.*

What Is the Present Continuous?

We use the **present continuous** to talk about:

- Things that are **happening right now**, at this moment
- Things that are happening **today** or **around this time** (but not always)

Think of the present continuous like a photograph — it shows exactly what is happening at one specific moment.

Present Continuous Examples

Tom is eating lunch. (He is eating lunch right now, at this moment.)

Anna is talking on the phone. (She is talking right now.)

It is raining outside. (It is raining at this moment.)

We are studying English. (We are doing this right now.)

How to Make the Present Continuous

Use the verb **to be** (am / is / are) + the main verb with **-ing**:

Subject + am / is / are + verb + -ing

I am eating.

You are working.

He is sleeping.

She is reading.

It is raining.

We are studying.

They are playing.

Note: The **-ing** form is sometimes called the **present participle**. We add **-ing** to the end of the base verb: eat → eating, work → working, play → playing.

Present Continuous: Positive, Negative, and Question

Form	Example
Positive	She is watching TV.
Negative	She is not watching TV. / She isn't watching TV.
Question	Is she watching TV?

Note: **Isn't** is short for **is not**. **Aren't** is short for **are not**.

Common Time Words for Present Continuous

These words often appear with the present continuous:

- **now** – *I am eating now.*
- **right now** – *She is sleeping right now.*
- **at the moment** – *He is working at the moment.*
- **today** – *We are studying today.*
- **this morning / this afternoon / this week** – *They are travelling this week.*
- **Look! / Listen!** – *Look! The dog is running!*

Present Simple vs Present Continuous: Side by Side

Let's look at both tenses together so you can see the difference clearly.

Present Simple	Present Continuous
Habits and routines	Actions happening right now
Facts and things always true	Things happening around this time
Subject + base verb (+ s/es for he/she/it)	Subject + am/is/are + verb + -ing
<i>Anna drinks coffee every morning.</i>	<i>Anna is drinking coffee right now.</i>

Present Simple	Present Continuous
<i>Tom works in a school.</i>	<i>Tom is working at the moment.</i>
<i>It rains a lot in winter.</i>	<i>It is raining outside now.</i>
<i>The children play football.</i>	<i>The children are playing football.</i>
Time words: always, every day, usually, often, never	Time words: now, right now, at the moment, today

How to Form the -ing Ending

For most verbs, simply add **-ing** to the base verb:

eat → eating

read → reading

play → playing

work → working

sleep → sleeping

If the verb ends in a single **-e**, remove the **-e** and add **-ing**:

make → making

have → having

write → writing

come → coming

If the verb is short and ends in **consonant + vowel + consonant**, double the last letter and add **-ing**:

(A consonant is a letter that is not a, e, i, o, or u. A vowel is a, e, i, o, or u.)

run → running

sit → sitting

swim → swimming

get → getting

The Verb "To Be" in the Present Continuous

To make the present continuous, you always need the correct form of **to be**. Here is a quick table:

Subject	To Be	Contraction	Example
I	am	I'm	I'm eating.
You	are	You're	You're working.
He	is	He's	He's sleeping.
She	is	She's	She's reading.

Subject	To Be	Contraction	Example
It	is	It's	It's raining.
We	are	We're	We're studying.
They	are	They're	They're playing.

Important Differences: Present Simple vs Present Continuous

Same Verb, Different Meaning

Look at how the same verb changes meaning depending on which tense we use:

*She **reads** every night.* → This is her habit. She does it regularly.

*She **is reading** right now.* → She has a book in her hands at this moment.

*I **walk** to work.* → This is what I do every day.

*I **am walking** to work.* → I am on my way to work right now.

*The baby **cries** a lot.* → This happens often.

*The baby **is crying**.* → The baby is crying right now.

Facts vs Actions Happening Now

Use the **present simple** for facts about people and things:

Tom is a teacher. (fact — this is always true)

Water is cold. (fact — always true)

Dogs eat meat. (general fact)

Use the **present continuous** for actions at this specific moment:

Tom is teaching his class. (happening right now)

The dog is eating its food. (happening right now)

Common Mistakes

✗ *She is drink coffee every morning.*

✓ **Present simple for habits:** *She drinks coffee every morning.*

✗ *He work right now.*

✓ **Use am/is/are + -ing for right now:** *He is working right now.*

✗ *I am always eat breakfast at 8.*

✓ **Use present simple with "always":** *I always eat breakfast at 8.*

✗ *They are play football every Saturday.*

✓ **Present simple for regular activities:** *They play football every Saturday.*

✗ *She is work in a hospital.*

✓ **Use present simple for jobs (always true):** *She works in a hospital.*

✗ *Look! The children play in the garden!*

✓ **Use present continuous for actions happening right now:** *Look! The children are playing in the garden!*

✗ *He eating lunch at the moment.*

✓ **Don't forget "to be":** *He is eating lunch at the moment.*

✗ *Does she working today?*

✓ **Use "is" for present continuous questions:** *Is she working today?*

Contractions in Present Simple and Present Continuous

In everyday English, we often use **contractions** — short forms of two words joined together.

Present Simple Contractions (Negative)

Full Form	Contraction	Example
do not	don't	I don't eat meat.
does not	doesn't	She doesn't like cats.

Present Continuous Contractions

Full Form	Contraction	Example
I am working	I'm working	I'm working at the moment.
She is not working	She isn't working	She isn't working today.
They are not sleeping	They aren't sleeping	They aren't sleeping now.

Present Simple vs Present Continuous: Quick Summary

Here are the key things to remember:

- Use the **present simple** for habits, routines, and facts — things that are always true or happen regularly.
- Use the **present continuous** for actions happening **right now** or around this time.
- Present simple: **Subject + base verb** (add **-s/-es** for he/she/it).
- Present continuous: **Subject + am/is/are + verb + -ing**.
- Look for time words: *every day, always, usually, never* → present simple. *Now, right now, at the moment, today* → present continuous.
- Always use the correct form of **to be** (am, is, are) in the present continuous.
- For negatives in the present simple, use **don't** or **doesn't**. For the present continuous, use **isn't** or **aren't**.

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

Present Simple vs Present Continuous – Practice Test

A1 | 30 Questions: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Gap & Fill-in-the-Blank

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 I ____ breakfast every morning.

- ☐ A am eating
- ☐ B eat
- ☐ C eats
- ☐ D am eat

2 Look! The baby ____ right now.

- ☐ A sleep
- ☐ B sleeps
- ☐ C is sleeping
- ☐ D are sleeping

3 My dad ____ to work by bus.

- ☐ A is going
- ☐ B go
- ☐ C goes
- ☐ D are going

4 We ____ football at the moment.

- ☐ A play
- ☐ B plays
- ☐ C are playing
- ☐ D is playing

5 She ____ TV every night.

- ☐ A is watching
- ☐ B watch
- ☐ C watches
- ☐ D are watching

6 Listen! Tom ____ in the kitchen.

- A** sings
- B** sing
- C** is singing
- D** are singing

7 They ____ English at school.

- A** is studying
- B** studies
- C** study
- D** am studying

8 I ____ a book right now.

- A** read
- B** reads
- C** am reading
- D** is reading

9 The sun ____ in the east every day.

- A** is rising
- B** rise
- C** rises
- D** are rising

10 Where is Anna? She ____ her hair now.

- A** washes
- B** wash
- C** is washing
- D** are washing

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

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

- A** is playing
- B** plays
- C** play

12 My father ____ coffee every morning.

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

13 I ____ my homework at the moment.

- A** am doing
- B** do
- C** does

14 She ____ to school by bus every day.

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

15 They ____ TV now. Please be quiet.

- A** are watching
- B** watch
- C** watches

16 We usually ____ lunch at one o'clock.

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

17 Listen! She ____ a song in her room.

- A** is singing
- B** sings
- C** sing

18 He ____ English, French, and Spanish.

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

19 The children ____ in the park this afternoon.

- A** are playing
- B** play
- C** plays

20 I ____ breakfast at seven o'clock every day.

- A** eat
- B** am eating
- C** is eating

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

21 She _____ at a hospital every day.

22 Look! The baby _____ right now.

23 They _____ football at the moment.

24 I _____ coffee every morning.

25 He _____ watching TV right now.

26 My sister usually _____ a book before bed.

27 We _____ lunch now. Please call later.

28 The dog _____ like cats.

29 It _____ outside. Take an umbrella!

30 I _____ sleeping. I am reading a book.

Answer Key & Explanations

Present Simple vs Present Continuous | A1

Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **B** Correct Answer: eat  Explanation: We use Present Simple for things we do every day. I eat breakfast every morning.
2. **C** Correct Answer: is sleeping  Explanation: We use Present Continuous for things happening right now. The word Look! tells us it is happening now.
3. **C** Correct Answer: goes  Explanation: We use Present Simple for habits. With he/she/it, we add -s to the verb. He goes to work by bus.
4. **C** Correct Answer: are playing  Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening at the moment. With we, we use are + verb-ing. We are playing football.
5. **C** Correct Answer: watches  Explanation: We use Present Simple for routines. With she, we add -es to watch. She watches TV every night.
6. **C** Correct Answer: is singing  Explanation: We use Present Continuous for something happening now. The word Listen! tells us it is happening now. Tom is singing.
7. **C** Correct Answer: study  Explanation: We use Present Simple for regular activities. With they, we do not add -s. They study English at school.
8. **C** Correct Answer: am reading  Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening right now. With I, we use am + verb-ing. I am reading a book.
9. **C** Correct Answer: rises  Explanation: We use Present Simple for facts that are always true. The sun rises in the east. With it, we add -s.
10. **C** Correct Answer: is washing  Explanation: We use Present Continuous for something happening now. The word now tells us the action is happening at this moment. She is washing her hair.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: is playing  Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening right now. The word Look! tells us the action is happening at this moment. The dog is playing in the garden right now.
12. **A** Correct Answer: drinks  Explanation: We use the Present Simple for habits and routines. Every morning tells us this is a regular habit. My father drinks coffee every morning.

13. **A** Correct Answer: am doing ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening at the moment. With I, we use am + verb-ing. I am doing my homework at the moment.
14. **A** Correct Answer: goes ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for daily routines. Every day is a clue for a regular action. With she, we add -s to the verb. She goes to school by bus every day.
15. **A** Correct Answer: are watching ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening now. The word now and Please be quiet tell us the action is in progress. They are watching TV now.
16. **A** Correct Answer: have ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for regular routines. The word usually tells us this happens regularly. We usually have lunch at one o'clock.
17. **A** Correct Answer: is singing ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening right now. Listen! is a clue that the action is happening at this moment. She is singing a song in her room.
18. **A** Correct Answer: speaks ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for facts and things that are always true. Knowing a language is a permanent fact, not a temporary action. He speaks English, French, and Spanish.
19. **A** Correct Answer: are playing ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening now or around now. This afternoon tells us the action is in progress at this time. The children are playing in the park this afternoon.
20. **A** Correct Answer: eat ✓ Explanation: We use the Present Simple for daily habits. Every day tells us this is a routine. With I, the verb has no -s. I eat breakfast at seven o'clock every day.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **works** Correct Answer: works ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for things that happen every day (routines). With she, we add -s to the verb. She works every day.
22. **is sleeping** Correct Answer: is sleeping ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for things happening right now. The structure is is + verb-ing. The baby is sleeping now.
23. **are playing** Correct Answer: are playing ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening at the moment. With they, we use are + verb-ing. They are playing football.
24. **drink|'m drinking** Correct Answer: drink ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for habits and routines. Every morning is a time word for habits. I drink coffee every morning.
25. **is not|isn't** Correct Answer: is not / isn't ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for things happening right now. The negative form is is not or isn't + verb-ing. He isn't watching TV right now.
26. **reads** Correct Answer: reads ✓ Explanation: The word usually tells us this is a habit, so we use the Present Simple. With she/he/it, we add -s. My sister reads a book.

27. **are eating** Correct Answer: are eating ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for actions happening now. With we, the structure is are + verb-ing. We are eating lunch now.
28. **does not|doesn't** Correct Answer: does not / doesn't ✓ Explanation: We use Present Simple for general facts. The negative form with he/she/it is does not or doesn't. The dog doesn't like cats.
29. **is raining** Correct Answer: is raining ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for something happening right now. With it, the structure is is + verb-ing. It is raining outside.
30. **am not|'m not** Correct Answer: am not / 'm not ✓ Explanation: We use Present Continuous for what is happening now. The negative form with I is am not or 'm not. I am not sleeping.

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. |