

Stative Verbs (Present Simple or Present Continuous)

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

Stative Verbs: Present Simple or Present Continuous?

In English, we use two very common tenses to talk about the present: the **Present Simple** and the **Present Continuous**. Most of the time, both tenses are possible. But with **stative verbs**, we almost always use the **Present Simple** — not the Present Continuous.

In this lesson, you will learn what stative verbs are, why we do not use them in the continuous form, and how to use them correctly in everyday English.

Let's start with a simple situation:

Anna is in the kitchen. She is making a cup of tea. She likes tea very much.

Look at these two sentences:

- She **is making** a cup of tea. ✅ (an action happening right now → Present Continuous)
- She **likes** tea very much. ✅ (a feeling, not an action → Present Simple)

We say "**she likes**", not "**she is liking**". Why? Because **like** is a stative verb. Read on to find out more!

What Is a Stative Verb?

A **stative verb** describes a **state** — something that is not an action. A state is a condition or feeling that does not change moment to moment. You cannot usually see a state happening.

Compare these two ideas:

- **Action:** Tom is eating a sandwich. (You can watch him eat. It is happening right now.)
- **State:** Tom knows the answer. (You cannot watch him "know". It is just a condition.)

Because stative verbs describe states, not actions, we use the **Present Simple** with them — even when we are talking about right now.

Common Groups of Stative Verbs

Stative verbs fall into several natural groups. Learning the groups will help you remember them more easily.

1. Feelings and Emotions

These verbs describe how someone feels inside.

Stative Verb	Example Sentence
like	I like chocolate ice cream.
love	She loves her dog.
hate	He hates cold weather.
want	They want a new car.
need	I need some help, please.
prefer	She prefers tea to coffee.

2. Thinking and Opinions

These verbs describe what is in someone's mind — their thoughts or beliefs.

Stative Verb	Example Sentence
know	I know the answer.
believe	She believes the story.
think (= have an opinion)	He thinks Paris is beautiful.
understand	We understand the rule now.
remember	I remember your name.
forget	He always forgets his keys.

3. Senses and Perception

These verbs describe what your body notices automatically — things you do not choose to do.

Stative Verb	Example Sentence
see	I see a bird in the garden.
hear	She hears music from the next room.
smell	The soup smells delicious.
taste	This cake tastes wonderful.
feel (= seem)	The water feels cold.

4. Possession and Existence

These verbs describe who owns something or what exists.

Stative Verb	Example Sentence
have (= own / possess)	I have a blue bicycle.
own	He owns a small café.
belong to	This bag belongs to Maria.
contain	The box contains old photos.
exist	That problem exists in many countries.

The Main Rule: Stative Verbs and Present Simple

Here is the key rule:

Stative verbs describe states, not actions. We use them in the Present Simple, NOT the Present Continuous.

We use the **Present Simple** for:

- Things that are always true: *I **love** music.*
- Things that are true right now (states): *She **knows** the answer.*

We use the **Present Continuous** for:

- Actions happening right now: *He **is reading** a book.*
- Temporary activities: *They **are staying** at a hotel this week.*

Side-by-Side Comparison Table

Situation	Correct Tense	Example
An action happening now	Present Continuous	She is cooking dinner.
A feeling right now	Present Simple	She loves cooking.
An action happening now	Present Continuous	He is looking at the map.
A thought right now	Present Simple	He knows the way.
An action happening now	Present Continuous	We are eating pizza.
A sense / perception right now	Present Simple	The pizza tastes amazing.

Important Differences: Verbs That Can Be Both

Some verbs can be **stative** (describing a state) or **active** (describing an action), depending on their meaning. This changes which tense we use.

Think

think = have an opinion → stative → use Present Simple

*I **think** this film is great.* (= In my opinion, the film is great.)

think = use your brain actively / consider something → active → use Present Continuous

*I **am thinking** about the question.* (= I am processing the question right now.)

Have

have = own / possess → stative → use Present Simple

*She **has** a red car.* (= She owns a red car.)

have = do an activity (have lunch, have a shower, have fun) → active → use Present Continuous

*She **is having** lunch.* (= She is eating lunch right now.)

See

see = notice with your eyes automatically → stative → use Present Simple

*I **see** a cat on the wall.*

see = meet someone / visit a doctor → active → use Present Continuous

*I **am seeing** the doctor tomorrow.*

Feel

feel = a physical sensation (describes how something seems) → stative → use Present Simple

*The blanket **feels** soft.*

feel = experience a personal feeling (an internal experience) → can use either

*I **feel** tired today. or I **am feeling** tired today.* (Both are correct.)

Smell and Taste

smell / taste = a quality of something → stative → use Present Simple

*This coffee **smells** wonderful.*

*The soup **tastes** salty.*

smell / taste = an action (someone is actively doing it) → active → use Present Continuous

*The chef **is tasting** the soup to check the salt.*

*She **is smelling** the flowers.*

Forming the Present Simple with Stative Verbs

A quick reminder of how to form the **Present Simple** with stative verbs:

Subject	Positive	Negative	Question
I / You / We / They	I like cats.	I don't like cats.	Do you like cats?
He / She / It	She knows the rule.	She doesn't know the rule.	Does she know the rule?

Remember: With *he, she, it*, we add **-s** or **-es** to the verb in positive sentences.

Mini Story: Spot the Stative Verbs

It is Saturday morning. Carlos is sitting at the kitchen table. He is drinking a cup of coffee. He thinks the coffee is delicious. His sister, Mia, is cooking breakfast. The kitchen smells amazing. Carlos loves Saturday mornings. He doesn't need to work today. He knows it will be a great day!

Let's look at the stative verbs in this story:

- **thinks** (= has an opinion) → Present Simple ✓
- **smells** (= a quality of the kitchen) → Present Simple ✓
- **loves** (= a feeling) → Present Simple ✓
- **doesn't need** (= necessity, a state) → Present Simple ✓
- **knows** (= a thought/belief) → Present Simple ✓

And the action verbs use the Present Continuous: *is sitting, is drinking, is cooking.* ✓

Common Mistakes

Here are mistakes that learners often make with stative verbs. Study them carefully!

- ✗ I am knowing the answer.
- ✓ **I know the answer.** (*know* is a stative verb — use Present Simple.)
- ✗ She is liking chocolate very much.
- ✓ **She likes chocolate very much.** (*like* is a stative verb — use Present Simple.)
- ✗ They are wanting a table for two, please.
- ✓ **They want a table for two, please.** (*want* is a stative verb — use Present Simple.)
- ✗ I am believing you.
- ✓ **I believe you.** (*believe* is a stative verb — use Present Simple.)
- ✗ He is having a new laptop. (= he owns it)
- ✓ **He has a new laptop.** (*have* used for possession is stative — use Present Simple.)
- ✗ This soup is tasting wonderful. (= describing quality)
- ✓ **This soup tastes wonderful.** (*taste* used to describe a quality is stative — use Present Simple.)
- ✗ Do you understanding me?
- ✓ **Do you understand me?** (In questions, use the base form of the verb after *do/does*.)

Stative Verbs: Quick Summary

Here are the key points to remember about stative verbs:

- **Stative verbs** describe states — feelings, thoughts, senses, and possession. They are not actions.
- We use stative verbs with the **Present Simple**, even when we mean right now.
- We do **NOT** normally use stative verbs with the **Present Continuous**.
- Common stative verbs include: **like, love, hate, want, need, know, believe, understand, think (opinion), see, hear, smell, taste, feel, have (possess), own, belong to**.
- Some verbs — like **think, have, see, smell, taste** — can be stative *or* active, depending on their meaning. Check the meaning first!

Type of Verb	Tense to Use	Example
Stative verb (state)	Present Simple	I love this song.
Action verb (action happening now)	Present Continuous	I am listening to this song.

Now practise **stative verbs** in the exercises below.

Stative Verbs (Present Simple or Present Continuous) – Practice Test

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

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 I ____ this song. It's beautiful!

- ☐ A am loving
- ☐ B love
- ☐ C loves
- ☐ D am love

2 She ____ her homework right now.

- ☐ A does
- ☐ B is doing
- ☐ C do
- ☐ D doing

3 He ____ a new car. It belongs to his father.

- ☐ A is having
- ☐ B has
- ☐ C have
- ☐ D is have

4 The children ____ in the garden at the moment.

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

5 I ____ what you mean. Can you explain again?

- ☐ A am not understanding
- ☐ B don't understand
- ☐ C not understand
- ☐ D doesn't understand

6 This soup ____ delicious! I love it.

- A** is tasting
- B** tastes
- C** taste
- D** are tasting

7 My brother ____ TV in his room right now.

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

8 She ____ her teacher very much.

- A** is liking
- B** like
- C** likes
- D** are liking

9 We ____ to music on the bus every morning.

- A** are listening
- B** listen
- C** is listening
- D** listens

10 Tom ____ a headache, so he is resting.

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

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

11 I ____ this song. It's so beautiful!

- A** love
- B** am loving
- C** loves

12 She ____ her mother's eyes. They look the same!

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

13 He ____ to go to the party tonight.

- A** doesn't want
- B** isn't wanting
- C** don't want

14 We ____ some fresh bread in the kitchen.

- A** smell
- B** are smelling
- C** smells

15 This soup ____ really good!

- A** tastes
- B** is tasting
- C** taste

16 I ____ what you mean. Please explain more!

- A** don't understand
- B** am not understanding
- C** doesn't understand

17 She ____ her new teacher very much.

- A** likes
- B** is liking
- C** like

18 They ____ a big house in the countryside.

- A** own
- B** are owning
- C** owns

19 He ____ his grandmother every weekend.

- A** visits
- B** is visiting
- C** visit

20 I ____ that this answer is correct.

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

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

21 She _____ the answer to every question in class.

22 I _____ chocolate ice cream. It is my favourite!

23 They _____ football in the park right now.

24 My brother _____ a new bicycle. He bought it yesterday.

25 I _____ this grammar rule. Can you explain it again?

26 The soup _____ really good. What is in it?

27 Listen! The birds _____ in the garden.

28 He _____ that exercise is very important for health.

29 We _____ a great movie at the moment. Come and join us!

30 This bag _____ to Maria. She left it here this morning.

Answer Key & Explanations

Stative Verbs (Present Simple or Present Continuous) | A2

Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **B** Correct Answer: love ✓ Explanation: Love is a stative verb. Stative verbs describe feelings or states, not actions. We do not use them in the present continuous. We say I love, not I am loving.
2. **B** Correct Answer: is doing ✓ Explanation: Do here is an action verb, not a stative verb. Because it is happening right now, we use the present continuous: She is doing her homework.
3. **B** Correct Answer: has ✓ Explanation: Have meaning possession is a stative verb. We use the present simple, not the present continuous. We say He has a car, not He is having a car.
4. **C** Correct Answer: are playing ✓ Explanation: Play is an action verb. The phrase at the moment tells us the action is happening now, so we use the present continuous: are playing.
5. **B** Correct Answer: don't understand ✓ Explanation: Understand is a stative verb about the mind. We use the present simple for stative verbs. We say I don't understand, not I am not understanding.
6. **B** Correct Answer: tastes ✓ Explanation: Taste used to describe a quality (how something tastes) is a stative verb. We use the present simple: This soup tastes delicious.
7. **C** Correct Answer: is watching ✓ Explanation: Watch is an action verb. Right now shows it is happening at this moment, so we use the present continuous: is watching.
8. **C** Correct Answer: likes ✓ Explanation: Like is a stative verb that describes a feeling. Stative verbs use the present simple. With she, we add -s: She likes her teacher.
9. **B** Correct Answer: listen ✓ Explanation: Every morning shows a habit or routine. We use the present simple for habits. Listen is also an action verb, but the time expression here requires present simple: We listen to music every morning.
10. **C** Correct Answer: has ✓ Explanation: Have meaning a state or condition (like a headache) is a stative verb. We use the present simple. With Tom (he), we say has, not is having.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: love ✓ Explanation: Love is a stative verb — it describes a feeling, not an action. We use the Present Simple with stative verbs, never the continuous. I love this song.
12. **A** Correct Answer: has ✓ Explanation: Have used to describe a physical characteristic is a stative verb. We use the Present Simple: She has her mother's eyes. We do not use is having here.

13. **A** Correct Answer: doesn't want ✓ Explanation: Want is a stative verb that expresses a desire. We use the Present Simple with a negative: He doesn't want to go. Isn't wanting is incorrect.
14. **A** Correct Answer: smell ✓ Explanation: Smell as a stative verb describes a perception, not an action. We use the Present Simple: We smell some fresh bread. Are smelling would suggest an active, ongoing action.
15. **A** Correct Answer: tastes ✓ Explanation: Taste used to describe a quality is a stative verb. We use the Present Simple: This soup tastes really good! We do not use the continuous form here.
16. **A** Correct Answer: don't understand ✓ Explanation: Understand is a stative verb — it describes a mental state. We use the Present Simple negative: I don't understand what you mean.
17. **A** Correct Answer: likes ✓ Explanation: Like is a stative verb that expresses a feeling or preference. We use the Present Simple: She likes her new teacher. Is liking is not correct here.
18. **A** Correct Answer: own ✓ Explanation: Own is a stative verb used to describe possession. We always use the Present Simple: They own a big house. We do not say are owning.
19. **A** Correct Answer: visits ✓ Explanation: Visit here describes a regular habit, so we use the Present Simple. The word every weekend is a time signal for routines. He visits his grandmother every weekend.
20. **A** Correct Answer: believe ✓ Explanation: Believe is a stative verb — it describes a mental opinion or thought. We use the Present Simple: I believe that this answer is correct. Am believing is incorrect.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **knows|know** Correct Answer: knows ✓ Explanation: Know is a stative verb. Stative verbs describe states, not actions, so we use the Present Simple, not Present Continuous. We say she knows, not she is knowing.
22. **love** Correct Answer: love ✓ Explanation: Love is a stative verb that describes a feeling or emotion. We use the Present Simple with stative verbs. We say I love, not I am loving.
23. **are playing** Correct Answer: are playing ✓ Explanation: Play is an action verb, not a stative verb. Because the action is happening right now, we use the Present Continuous. They are playing at this moment.
24. **has** Correct Answer: has ✓ Explanation: Have is a stative verb when it means to possess something. We use the Present Simple: he has, not he is having.
25. **don't understand** Correct Answer: don't understand ✓ Explanation: Understand is a stative verb. It describes a mental state, so we use the Present Simple negative: I don't understand, not I am not understanding.

26. **smells** Correct Answer: smells ✅ Explanation: Smell is a stative verb when it describes a quality or state. We use the Present Simple: the soup smells good, not is smelling.
27. **are singing** Correct Answer: are singing ✅ Explanation: Sing is an action verb. The word Listen! tells us this is happening right now, so we use the Present Continuous: are singing.
28. **believes** Correct Answer: believes ✅ Explanation: Believe is a stative verb that describes an opinion or mental state. We use the Present Simple: he believes, not he is believing.
29. **are watching** Correct Answer: are watching ✅ Explanation: Watch is an action verb. The phrase at the moment shows the action is happening right now, so we use the Present Continuous: are watching.
30. **belongs** Correct Answer: belongs ✅ Explanation: Belong is a stative verb that shows ownership or a state. We always use the Present Simple with it: it belongs to Maria, not it is belonging.

Score Guide

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|----------------------|--|
| 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. |