

# Present Continuous (I am doing)

**A**

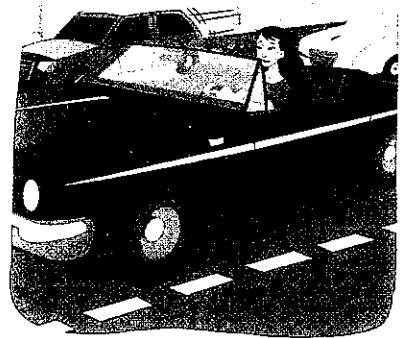
Study this example situation:

Sarah is in her car. She is on her way to work.  
She's **driving** to work. (= She is **driving** ...)

This means: she is driving *now*, at the time of speaking.  
The action is not finished.

**am/is/are + -ing** is the *present continuous*:

I	<b>am</b>	(= I'm)	<b>driving</b>
he/she/it	<b>is</b>	(= he's, etc.)	<b>working</b>
we/you/they	<b>are</b>	(= we're, etc.)	<b>doing</b> etc.



**B**

**I am doing** something = I started doing it, and I haven't finished. I'm in the middle of doing it.

- Please don't make so much noise. **I'm trying** to work. (*not* I try)
- "Where's Mark?" "He's **taking** a shower." (*not* He takes a shower)
- Let's go out now. It **isn't raining** anymore. (*not* It doesn't rain)
- How's your new job? **Are you enjoying** it?
- What's all that noise? What's **going on?** or What's **happening?**

Sometimes the action is not happening at the time of speaking. For example:

Steve is talking to a friend on the phone. He says:



**I'm reading** a really good book right now.  
It's about a man who ...

Steve says "I'm reading ..." but he is *not* reading the book at the time of speaking.  
He means that he has started reading the book but has not finished it yet. He is in the middle of reading it.

Some more examples:

- Kate wants to work in Italy, so she's **learning** Italian.  
(but perhaps she isn't learning Italian at the time of speaking)
- Some friends of mine **are building** their own house. They hope to finish it next summer.

**C**

You can use the present continuous with **today, this week, this year**, etc. (periods around now):

- A: You're **working** hard **today**. (*not* You work hard today)  
B: Yes, I have a lot to do.
- The company I work for **isn't doing** so well **this year**.

We use the present continuous when we talk about a change that has started to happen. We often use these verbs in this way:

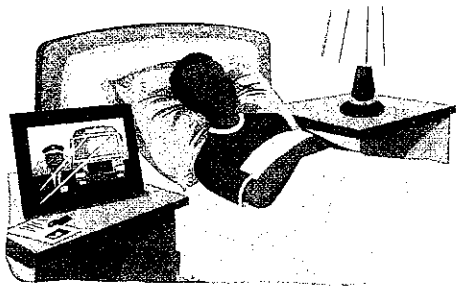
**getting**      **changing**      **increasing**      **rising**      **starting**  
**becoming**      **improving**      **growing**      **falling**      **beginning**

- Is your English **getting** better? (*not* Does your English get better)
- The population of the world **is increasing** very fast. (*not* increases)
- At first I didn't like my job, but **I'm starting** to enjoy it now. (*not* I start)



# Simple Present (I do)

**A** Study this example situation:



Alex is a bus driver, but now he is asleep in bed. He is not driving a bus. (He is asleep.)

but He **drives** a bus. (He is a bus driver.)

**drive(s), work(s), do(es), etc.**, is the *simple present*:

I/we/you/they	<b>drive/work/do, etc.</b>
he/she/it	<b>drives/works/does, etc.</b>

**B** We use the simple present to talk about things in general. We use it to say that something happens all the time or repeatedly, or that something is true in general:

- Nurses **take** care of patients in hospitals.
- I usually **leave** for work at 8 a.m.
- The earth **goes** around the sun.
- The coffee shop **opens** at 7:30 in the morning.

We say:

I **work** but he **works** you **go** but it **goes**  
 they **teach** but my sister **teaches** I **have** but he **has**

For spelling (-s or -es), see Appendix 6.

**C** We use **do/does** to make questions and negative sentences:

<b>do</b> <b>does</b>	I/we/you/they he/she/it	<b>work?</b> <b>drive?</b> <b>do?</b>	I/we/you/they he/she/it	<b>don't</b> <b>doesn't</b>	<b>work</b> <b>drive</b> <b>do</b>
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- I come from Japan. Where **do** you **come** from?
- I **don't travel** a lot.
- What **does** this word **mean**? (not What means this word?)
- Rice **doesn't grow** in cold climates.

In the following examples, **do** is also the main verb (do you **do** / doesn't **do**, etc.):

- "What **do** you **do**?" "I work in a store."
- He's always so lazy. He **doesn't do** anything to help us.

**D** We use the simple present to say how often we do things:

- I **get** up at 8:00 **every morning**.
- How often** do you **go** to the dentist?
- Julia **doesn't drink** coffee **very often**.
- Michael usually **plays** tennis two or three times a week.

**E** I **promise** / I **apologize**, etc.

Sometimes we do things by saying something. For example, when you promise to do something, you can say "I **promise** ..."; when you suggest something, you can say "I **suggest** ...":

- I **promise** I won't be late.
- "What do **you suggest** I do?" "I **suggest** that you ..."

In the same way we say: I **agree** ... / I **advise** ... / I **insist** ... / I **refuse** ... / I **suppose** ... , etc.

# Exercises

**2.1** Complete the sentences using the following verbs:

cause(s)    close(s)    connect(s)    go(es)    live(s)    ~~speaks(s)~~    take(s)

- 1 Tanya speaks German very well.
- 2 Ben and Jack ..... to the same school.
- 3 Bad driving ..... many accidents.
- 4 The museum ..... at 4:00 on Sundays.
- 5 My parents ..... in a very small apartment.
- 6 The Olympics ..... place every four years.
- 7 The Panama Canal ..... the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

**2.2** Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 Julia doesn't drink (not / drink) coffee very often.
- 2 What time ..... (the banks / close) here?
- 3 I have a car, but I ..... (not / use) it very much.
- 4 Where ..... (Maria / come) from? Is she Colombian?
- 5 "What ..... (you / do)?" "I'm an electrician."
- 6 Look at this sentence. What ..... (this word / mean)?
- 7 David isn't in very good shape. He ..... (not / get) any exercise.
- 8 It ..... (take) me an hour to get to work in the morning. How long ..... (it / take) you?

**2.3** Complete the sentences using these verbs. Sometimes you need the negative.

believe    eat    flow    ~~go~~    ~~grow~~    make    rise    tell    translate

- 1 The earth goes around the sun.
- 2 Rice doesn't grow in cold climates.
- 3 The sun ..... in the east.
- 4 Bees ..... honey.
- 5 Vegetarians ..... meat.
- 6 An atheist ..... in God.
- 7 An interpreter ..... from one language into another.
- 8 Liars are people who ..... the truth.
- 9 The Amazon River ..... into the Atlantic Ocean.

**2.4** You ask Emily questions about herself and her family. Write the questions.

- 1 You know that Emily plays tennis. You want to know how often. Ask her.  
How often do you play tennis ?
- 2 Perhaps Emily's sister plays tennis too. You want to know. Ask Emily.  
..... your sister ..... ?
- 3 You know that Emily goes to the movies a lot. You want to know how often. Ask her.  
..... ?
- 4 You know that Emily's brother works. You want to know what he does. Ask Emily.  
..... ?
- 5 You're not sure if Emily speaks Spanish. You want to know. Ask her.  
..... ?
- 6 You don't know where Emily's grandparents live. You want to know. Ask Emily.  
..... ?

**2.5** Complete using the following:

I agree    I apologize    I insist    I promise    I recommend    ~~I suggest~~

- 1 Mr. Evans is not in the office today. I suggest you try calling him tomorrow.
- 2 I won't tell anybody what you said. ....
- 3 (in a restaurant) You must let me pay for the meal. ....
- 4 ..... for what I said. I shouldn't have said it.
- 5 The new restaurant on Lake Street is very good. .... it.
- 6 I think you're absolutely right. .... with you.



# Exercises

Unit  
3

**3.1** Are the underlined verbs OK? Correct them where necessary.

- 1 Water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit. OK
- 2 How often are you going to the cinema? How often do you go
- 3 Ben tries to find a job, but he hasn't had any luck yet. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Melissa is calling her mother every day. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 The moon goes around the earth in about 27 days. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Can you hear those people? What do they talk about? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 What do you do in your spare time? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Sarah is a vegetarian. She doesn't eat meat. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 I must go now. It gets late. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 "Come on! It's time to leave." "OK, I come." \_\_\_\_\_
- 11 Mike is never late. He's always starting work on time. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 They don't get along well. They're always arguing. \_\_\_\_\_

**3.2** Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or simple present.

- 1 a I usually get (I / usually / get) hungry in the afternoon.  
b I'm getting (I / get) hungry. Let's go and eat something.
- 2 a "..... (you / listen) to the radio?" "No, you can turn it off."  
b "..... (you / listen) to the radio a lot?" "No, not very often."
- 3 a The Nile River ..... (flow) into the Mediterranean.  
b The river ..... (flow) very fast today—much faster than usual.
- 4 a My apartment is a mess. .... (I / not / do) the housework very often.  
b What ..... (you / usually / do) on weekends?
- 5 a Rachel is in New York right now. .... (She / stay) at the Park Hotel.  
b ..... (She / always / stay) there when she's in New York.

**3.3** Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or simple present.

- 1 Why are all these people here? What's happening (What / happen)?
- 2 Julia is good at languages. .... (She / speak) four languages very well.
- 3 Are you ready yet? ..... (Everybody / wait) for you.
- 4 I've never heard this word. How ..... (you / pronounce) it?
- 5 Kate ..... (not / work) this week. She's on vacation.
- 6 I think my English ..... (improve) slowly. It's better than it was.
- 7 Nicole ..... (live) in Dallas. She has never lived anywhere else.
- 8 Can we stop walking soon? ..... (I / start) to get tired.
- 9 Sam and Natalie are in Madrid right now. .... (They / visit) a friend of theirs.
- 10 "What ..... (your father / do)?" "He's an architect."
- 11 It took me an hour to get to work this morning. Most days ..... (it / not / take) so long.
- 12 I ..... (I / learn) to drive. My driving test is next month. My father ..... (teach) me.

**3.4** Finish B's sentences. Use always -ing.

- 1 A: I lost my keys again.  
B: Not again! You're always losing your keys .....
- 2 A: The car broke down again.  
B: That car is useless. It .....
- 3 A: Look! You made the same mistake again.  
B: Oh no, not again! I .....
- 4 A: Oh, I left my phone at home again.  
B: Typical! .....

A

We use continuous forms (**I'm waiting**, **it's raining** etc.) for actions and events that have started but haven't finished. Some verbs (for example, **know** and **like**) are not normally used in this way. We don't say "I am knowing" or "they are liking." We say "**I know**" and "they **like**."

The following verbs are not normally used in the present continuous:

like	want	need	prefer
know	understand	recognize	
believe	suppose	remember	mean
belong	fit	contain	consist
			seem

- I'm hungry. I **want** something to eat. (*not I'm wanting*)
- Do you understand** what I **mean**?
- Anna **doesn't seem** very happy right now.

B

**think**

When **think** means "believe" or "have an opinion," we do not use the continuous:

- I **think** Mary is Canadian, but I'm not sure. (*not I'm thinking*)
- What **do you think** of my idea? (= what is your opinion?)

When **think** means "consider," the continuous is possible:

- I'm **thinking** about what happened. I often **think** about it.
- Nicky **is thinking** of giving up her job. (= she is considering it)

C

**see**   **hear**   **smell**   **taste**   **look**   **feel**

We normally use the simple present (not the present continuous) with **see/hear/smell/taste**:

- Do you see** that man over there? (*not are you seeing*)
- The room **smells** bad. Let's open a window.
- This soup **doesn't taste** very good.

You can use the simple present or the present continuous to say how somebody **looks** or **feels** now:

- You **look** well today. *or* You're **looking** well today.
- How **do you feel** now? *or* How **are you feeling** now?

*but*

- I usually **feel** tired in the morning. (*not I'm usually feeling*)

D

**am/is/are being**

You can say **he's being** ..., **you're being** ..., etc., to say how somebody is behaving *now*:

- I can't understand why **he's being** so selfish. He isn't usually like that.  
(**being** selfish = behaving selfishly now)
- "The path is icy. Don't slip." "Don't worry. I'm **being** very careful."

Compare:

- He never thinks about other people. **He's** very selfish.  
(= he is selfish generally, not only now)
- I don't like to take risks. I'm a very careful person.

We use **am/is/are being** to say how a person is *behaving* (= doing something they can control) now. It is not usually possible in other situations:

- Sam **is** sick. (*not is being sick*)
- Are** you tired? (*not are you being tired*)

# Exercises

**4.1** Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or simple present.

- 1 Are you hungry? Do you want (you / want) something to eat?
- 2 Alan says he's 90 years old, but nobody ..... (believe) him.
- 3 She told me her name, but ..... (I / not / remember) it now.
- 4 Don't put the dictionary away. .... (I / use) it.
- 5 Don't put the dictionary away. .... (I / need) it.
- 6 Air ..... (consist) mainly of nitrogen and oxygen.
- 7 Who is that man? What ..... (he / want)?
- 8 Who is that man? Why ..... (he / look) at us?
- 9 Who is that man? ..... (you / recognize) him?
- 10 ..... (I / think) of selling my car. Would you be interested in buying it?
- 11 I can't make up my mind. What ..... (you / think) I should do?
- 12 Alex wasn't well earlier, but ..... (he / seem) OK now.

**4.2** Use the words in parentheses to make sentences.

<p>①</p>  <p>(you / not / seem / very happy today) You <u>don't seem</u> very happy today.</p>	<p>②</p>  <p>Are you OK? You look worried. (I / think / about something)</p>
<p>③</p>  <p>(who / this umbrella / belong to?) I have no idea.</p>	<p>④</p>  <p>(this / smell / good)</p>
<p>⑤</p>  <p>Excuse me. (anybody / sit / there?) No, it's free.</p>	<p>⑥</p>  <p>(these gloves / not / fit / me) They're too small.</p>

**4.3** Are the underlined verbs OK? Correct them where necessary.

- 1 Michelle is thinking of giving up her job. OK
- 2 It's not true. I'm not believing it. I don't believe it.
- 3 I'm feeling hungry. Is there anything to eat? I'm feeling
- 4 I've never eaten that fruit. What is it tasting like? It tastes
- 5 I'm not sure what she does. I think she works in a store. I think
- 6 Look over there. What are you seeing? I see
- 7 You're very quiet. What are you thinking about? I'm thinking

**4.4** Complete the sentences. Use is/are being (continuous) or is/are (simple).

- 1 I can't understand why he's being so selfish. He isn't usually like that.
- 2 You'll like Andrea when you meet her. She ..... very nice.
- 3 Sarah ..... very nice to me right now. I wonder why.
- 4 They ..... very happy. They just got married.
- 5 You're normally very patient, so why ..... so unreasonable about waiting ten more minutes?
- 6 Would you like something to eat? ..... hungry?