

Advanced Grammar in Use

A reference
and practice
book for
advanced
learners of
English

SECOND
EDITION

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Present continuous and present simple (1)

A

We can use the present continuous with some state verbs (e.g. **attract, like, look, love, sound**) when we want to emphasise that a situation is temporary or for a period of time around the present. Compare:

- Jean stays with us quite often. The children **love** having her here. *and*
- Jean's with us at the moment. The children **are loving** having her here.

State verbs which we rarely use with the present continuous include **believe, consist of, doubt, own**. (For more examples see **GR:A4**.)

B

Some verbs have different meanings when they are used to talk about states and when they describe actions. With their 'state' meanings, they usually take simple rather than continuous forms. With their 'action' meanings, they may take simple or continuous forms, depending on context. Compare:

- The new treatment for influenza **doesn't appear** to work. (appear: *state* = seem) *and*
- Madonna **is currently appearing** in a musical on Broadway./ She often **appears** in musicals. (appear: *action* = take part)
- Do you think** it's a good idea? (think: *state* = about an opinion) *and*
- I'm thinking** of going in August./ Your trouble is you **think** too much. (think: *action* = consider)

Other verbs like this include **anticipate, cost, expect, feel, fit, have, imagine, measure, weigh**.

C

With some verbs describing *mental* states (e.g. **find, realise, regret, think, understand**) we can use the present continuous to emphasise that we have recently started to think about something or that we are not sure about something. Compare:

- I **regret** that the company will have to be sold. (= I have made the decision and I am sorry about it) *and*
- I'm regretting** my decision to give her the job. (= I am increasingly aware that it was the wrong decision)

When it means 'think carefully about' the verb **consider** is only used with the present continuous:

- He's **considering** taking early retirement. (*not* He considers taking early retirement.)

Some other verbs describing preferences and mental states (e.g. **agree, believe, conclude, know, prefer**) are rarely used with the present continuous:

- I **believe** you now. (*not* I'm believing you now.)

D

We use the present simple with verbs which perform the action they describe:

- I **admit** I can't see as well as I used to.
- We **apologise** for not replying earlier.

Other verbs like this (sometimes called *performatives*) include **acknowledge, advise, beg, confess, congratulate, declare, deny, forbid, guarantee, name, order, permit, predict, promise, refuse, remind, request, thank, warn**. Some verbs used as performatives in affirmative (= positive) sentences (**apologise, deny, guarantee, promise, suggest**) have a similar meaning with either the present simple or the present continuous in negative sentences:

- I **don't deny**/ **I'm not denying** taking the books, but Andy said it would be okay.

Note that we can use modals with performatives, often to make what we say more tentative or polite:

- We **would advise** you to arrive two hours before the flight leaves.
- I **must beg** you to keep this a secret.

- 1.1 Complete the sentences with the verbs given, using negatives or questions where necessary. Use the same verb for each sentence in the pair. Choose the present continuous if possible; if not, use the present simple. Use \surd to add any words outside the space and use contracted forms where appropriate, as in 1. (A & B)

attract consist of doubt feel fit have like ~~look~~ measure sound

- 1 a I hear you're having your house repainted. How \surd it ^{'s} *looking*? (or How \surd it ^{does} *look*?)
 b I bought this new dress today. How \surd it ^{does} *look*?
- 2 a A: What are you doing with that ruler? B: I the area of the kitchen.
 b The garden 12 by 20 metres.
- 3 a I whether I'll get another chance to retake the exam.
 b I suppose she might be at home tonight, but I it.
- 4 a The new science museum currently 10,000 visitors a month.
 b Flowers bees with their brightly coloured petals.
- 5 a Mike won't work at the top of the 20-storey building because he heights.
 b A: How's the new job? B: Well, at the moment, I it at all.
- 6 a My car's in the garage today. They new brakes.
 b I bought this jumper for Sue, but it her so I'll have to take it back.
- 7 a What's your shirt made from? It like silk.
 b I won't be coming to work today. I very well.
- 8 a The roof of the house only plastic sheets nailed down in a few places.
 b Their school uniform black trousers and a dark green jumper.
- 9 a Simon has been practising the song for days. It quite good, but he doesn't think he's ready yet to perform it in public.
 b A: What's that noise? B: It like a bird stuck in the chimney.
- 10 a I had a postcard from Joanne on holiday in Spain. It sounds like she a really good time.
 b My sister long blonde hair. You're bound to recognise her.

- 1.2 Cross out any improbable answers. (C & D)

- 1 *I'm understanding/ I understand* biology a lot better now that we've got a new teacher.
 2 I went to see a Formula One race last week, but *I admit/ I'm admitting* that I don't know much about cars.
 3 *Do you find/ Are you finding* it difficult to concentrate on your work with this music on?
 4 We'll do our best to get the computer repaired by next week, but *we're not guaranteeing/ we don't guarantee* it.
 5 I've just started to learn how to drive. Now *I'm knowing/ I know* how difficult it is, I'll never criticise your driving again.
 6 She says that she wasn't in the kitchen when the bottle smashed, but *I refuse/ I'm refusing* to believe her.
 7 *I'm certainly agreeing/ I certainly agree* with you that people shouldn't drink and drive.
 8 I know the company has made a loss this year, but *I'm not apologising/ I don't apologise* for that.
 9 It's very difficult for us to get jobs here, so *we're considering/ we consider* emigrating to Canada.