Present Continuous (I am doing)

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.

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

am/is/are + –ing is the present continuous:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>am</th>
<th>he/she/it</th>
<th>we/you/they</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is</td>
<td>(= I’m)</td>
<td>(= he’s, etc.)</td>
<td>(= we’re, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>driving</th>
<th>working</th>
<th>doing, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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)

Present Continuous and Simple Present ➜ Units 3–4  Present Tenses with a Future Meaning ➜ Unit 18
Exercises

1.1 What’s happening in the pictures? Choose from these verbs:
cross  hide  scratch   take   tie   wave

1. She’s taking ... a picture.
2. He ... his shoelaces.
3. ... the road.
4. ... his head.
5. ... behind a tree.
6. ... to somebody.

1.2 The sentences on the right follow those on the left. Which sentence goes with which?

Please don’t make so much noise.
We need to leave soon.
I don’t have anywhere to live right now.
I need to eat something soon.
They don’t need their car anymore.
Things are not so good at work.
What they say isn’t true.
We’re going to get wet.

a I’m getting hungry.
b They’re lying.
c It’s starting to rain.
d They’re trying to sell it.
e It’s getting late.
f I’m trying to work.
g I’m staying with friends.
h The company is losing money.

1.3 Write questions. Use the present continuous.

1. What’s all that noise? ... (what / happen?)
2. What’s the matter? ... (why / you / cry?)
3. Where’s your mother? ... (she / work / today?)
4. I haven’t seen you in ages. ... (what / you / do / these days?)
5. Amy is a student. ... (what / she / study?)
6. Who are those people? ... (what / they / do?)
7. I heard you started a new job. ... (you / enjoy / it?)
8. We’re not in a hurry. ... (why / you / walk / so fast?)

1.4 Put the verb into the correct form, affirmative (I’m doing, etc.) or negative (I’m not doing, etc.).

1. Please don’t make so much noise. ... I’m trying ... (I / try) to work.
2. Let’s go out now. ... It isn’t raining ... (it / rain) anymore.
3. You can turn off the music. ... (I / listen) to it.
4. Kate called last night. She’s on a trip with friends. ... (She / have)
a great time and doesn’t want to come back.
5. Andrew started evening classes recently. ... (He / learn) Japanese.
6. Jason and Sarah have had an argument and now ... (they / speak)
to each other.
7. The situation is already very bad, and now ... (it / get) worse.
8. Tim ... (work) today. He’s taken the day off.
9. ... (I / look) for Allison. Do you know where she is?
10. The washing machine has been repaired. ... (It / work) now.
11. ... (They / build) a new hospital. It will be finished next year.
12. Ben is a student, but he’s not very happy. ... (He / enjoy) his courses.
13. ... (The weather / change). I think it’s going to rain.
14. Dan has been in the same job for a long time. ... (He / start) to get bored with it.
Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-61761-1 — Grammar in Use Intermediate Student’s Book w/ Answers & Interactive eBook
Self-study Reference and Practice for Students of American English 4th Ed
Raymond Murphy, With William R. Smalzer, Joseph Chapple
Excerpt

Unit 2

Simple Present (I do)

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:

1/I/we/you/they drive/work/do, etc.

he/she/it drives/works/does, etc.

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.

Simple Present and Present Continuous ➔ Units 3–4
Present Tenses with a Future Meaning ➔ Unit 18
Exercises

2.1 Complete the sentences using the following verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cause(s)</th>
<th>close(s)</th>
<th>connect(s)</th>
<th>go(es)</th>
<th>live(s)</th>
<th>speak(s)</th>
<th>take(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanya <em>speaks</em> German very well.</td>
<td>Ben and Jack <em>go</em> to the same school.</td>
<td>Bad driving <em>cause(s)</em> many accidents.</td>
<td>The museum <em>close(s)</em> at 4:00 on Sundays.</td>
<td>My parents <em>live</em> in a very small apartment.</td>
<td>The Olympics <em>take(s)</em> place every four years.</td>
<td>The Panama Canal <em>connect(s)</em> the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Put the verb into the correct form.

1. Julia _doesn’t drink_ coffee very often.
2. What time _do the banks close_ here?
3. I have a car, but I _don’t use_ it very much.
4. Where _does Maria come_ from? Is she Colombian?
5. “What _do you do_?” “I’m an electrician.”
6. Look at this sentence. What _does this word mean_?
7. It _take_ me an hour to get to work in the morning. How long _does it take_ you?

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>believe</th>
<th>eat</th>
<th>flow</th>
<th>go</th>
<th>grow</th>
<th>make</th>
<th>rise</th>
<th>tell</th>
<th>translate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The earth <em>goes</em> around the sun.</td>
<td>Rice <em>doesn’t grow</em> in cold climates.</td>
<td>The sun <em>rises</em> in the east.</td>
<td>Bees <em>make</em> honey.</td>
<td>Vegetarians <em>eat</em> meat.</td>
<td>An atheist <em>believe</em> in God.</td>
<td>An interpreter <em>translate</em> from one language into another.</td>
<td>Liars are people who <em>lie</em> the truth.</td>
<td>The Amazon River <em>flows</em> into the Atlantic Ocean.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
   How often _does your sister play tennis_?
3. You know that Emily goes to the movies a lot. You want to know how often. Ask her.
   How often _do you go to the movies_?
4. You know that Emily’s brother works. You want to know what he does. Ask Emily.
   What _do you do_?
5. You’re not sure if Emily speaks Spanish. You want to know. Ask her.
   _Does she speak Spanish_?
6. You don’t know where Emily’s grandparents live. You want to know. Ask Emily.
   Where _do they live_?

2.5 Complete using the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I apologize</th>
<th>I insist</th>
<th>I promise</th>
<th>I recommend</th>
<th>I suggest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Evans is not in the office today. <em>I suggest</em> you try calling him tomorrow.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I won’t tell anybody what you said.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I agree</em> you’re absolutely right.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The new restaurant on Lake Street is very good. <em>I suggest</em> it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Present Continuous and Simple Present 1
(I am doing and I do)

A

Compare:

**Present continuous (I am doing)**

We use the *continuous* for things happening at or around the time of speaking. The action is not complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The water is boiling. Be careful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Listen to those people. What language are they speaking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Let’s go out. It isn’t raining now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ “I’m busy.” “What are you doing?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I’m getting hungry. Let’s go and eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Kate wants to work in Italy, so she’s learning Italian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The population of the world is increasing very fast.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We use the continuous for temporary situations (things that continue for a short time):

| ☐ I’m living with some friends until I find a place of my own. |
| ☐ A: You’re working hard today. B: Yes, I have a lot to do. |

See Unit 1 for more information.

**Simple present (I do)**

We use the simple for things in general or things that happen repeatedly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Excuse me, do you speak English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ It doesn’t rain very much in the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What do you usually do on weekends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I always get hungry in the afternoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Most people learn to swim when they are children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Every day the population of the world increases by about 200,000 people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We use the simple for permanent situations (things that continue for a long time):

| ☐ My parents live in Vancouver. They have lived there their whole lives. |
| ☐ Joe isn’t lazy. He works hard most of the time. |

See Unit 2 for more information.

B

I always do and I’m always doing

**I always do** something = I do it every time:

| ☐ I always go to work by car. (not I’m always going) |

**I’m always doing** something = I do it too often or more often than normal. For example:  

I lost my keys again. I’m always losing them.

I’m always losing them = I lose them too often, or more often than normal.

| ☐ Eric is never satisfied. He’s always complaining. (= he complains too much) |
| ☐ You’re always looking at your phone. Don’t you have anything else to do? |
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. **tries**
4 Melissa is calling her mother every day. **is calling**
5 The moon **goes** around the earth in about 27 days. **goes**
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. **She doesn’t**
9 I must go now. It **gets** late. **gets**
10 “Come on! It’s time to leave.” “OK, I **come**.” **come**
11 Mike is never late. He’s **always starting work on time.** **always**
12 They don’t get along well. They’re **always arguing.** **always**

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

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

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

3.4 Finish B’s sentences. Use always ‒ing.

1 A: I lost my keys again. **You’re always losing your keys**
   B: Not again! **You’re always losing your keys**
2 A: The car broke down again. **It**
   B: That car is useless. **It**
3 A: Look! You made the same mistake again. **I**
   B: Oh no, not again! **I**
4 A: Oh, I left my phone at home again. **Typical!** **Typical!**
Present Continuous and Simple Present 2 (I am doing and I do)

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>like</th>
<th>want</th>
<th>need</th>
<th>prefer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
<td>understand</td>
<td>recognize</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believe</td>
<td>suppose</td>
<td>remember</td>
<td>mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belong</td>
<td>fit</td>
<td>contain</td>
<td>consist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 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.

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)

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)

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? ... (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.

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?
4 I've never eaten that fruit. What is it tasting like?
5 I'm not sure what she does. I think she works in a store.
6 Look over there. What are you seeing?
7 You're very quiet. What are you thinking about?

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?
In questions and negative sentences we use **did/didn’t + infinitive** (enjoy/see/go, etc.).

For spelling (stopped, studied, etc.), see Appendix 6.

For a list of irregular verbs, see Appendix 1.

**Simple Past and Past Continuous ➜ Unit 6**

**Simple Past and Present Perfect ➜ Units 8, 13**

The past of **be (am/is/are)** is **was/were**:

- I was annoyed because they were late.
- Was the weather good when you were on vacation?
- They weren’t able to come because they were so busy.
- I wasn’t hungry, so I didn’t eat anything.
- Did you go out last night, or were you too tired?
Exercises

5.1 Read what Lauren says about a typical working day:

Yesterday was a typical working day for Lauren. Write what she did or didn’t do yesterday.

1. She **got up** at 7:00.
2. She **had** a big breakfast.
3. She **walked** to work.
4. It **took** her about half an hour to get to work.
5. She **started** work at 8:45.
6. She **didn’t** have lunch.
7. She **left** work at 5:00.
8. She **was** tired when she **got** home.
9. She **cooked** dinner a little later.
10. She **went** out last night.
11. She **went** to bed at about 11:00.
12. She **always** sleeps well.

5.2 Complete the sentences using the following verbs in the correct form:

- buy
- catch
- cost
- fall
- hurt
- sell
- spend
- teach
- throw
- write

1. Mozart **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music.
2. “How did you learn to drive?” “My father **teaches** me.”
3. We couldn’t afford to keep our car, so we **sold** it.
4. Dave **fell** down the stairs this morning and **hurt** his leg.
5. Joe **threw** the ball to Sue, who **caught** it.
6. Kate **spent** a lot of money yesterday. She **bought** a dress which **cost** $200.

5.3 You ask James about his trip in the U.S. Write your questions.

1. **You:** Where **did** you **go**?
   **James:** To the U.S. We went on a trip from San Francisco to Denver.
2. **You:** How **did** you **get** there? **By car?**
   **James:** Yes, we rented a car in San Francisco.
3. **You:** It’s a long way to drive. **How long** **did** it **take**?
   **James:** Two weeks, but we stopped at a lot of places on the way.
4. **You:** Where **did** you **sleep**? In hotels?
   **James:** Yes, small hotels or motels.
5. **You:** **How** was your trip?
   **James:** It was very hot – sometimes too hot.
6. **You:** Did you **visit** the Grand Canyon?
   **James:** Of course. It was wonderful.

5.4 Complete the sentences. Put the verb into the correct form, affirmative or negative.

1. It was warm, so I **took** off my coat. (take)
2. The movie wasn’t very good. I **didn’t enjoy** it much. (enjoy)
3. I knew Sarah was busy, so I **didn’t disturb** her. (disturb)
4. We were very tired, so we **left** the party early. (leave)
5. It was hard carrying the bags. They **were** really heavy. (be)
6. The bed was very uncomfortable. I **didn’t sleep** well. (sleep)
7. This watch wasn’t expensive. It **cost** much. (cost)
8. The window was open, and a bird **flew** into the room. (fly)
9. I was in a hurry, so I **had** time to call you. (have)
10. I didn’t like the hotel. The room **wasn’t** very clean. (be)