

Present Simple

The present simple is used:

1. to express an action which happens again and again, that is a habit. It is often found with these time expressions:
always, every day, usually, sometimes, never
I sometimes walk to work.
2. to express a fact which is always true, or true for a long time.
The sun rises in the East. (always true)
I come from Spain. (true for a long time)
3. to express a future meaning with timetables.
The train leaves at four.

Third person singular: Spelling of verb + -s

1. the normal rule is to add-s to the base form of the verb:
want wants, eat eats
2. Add -es to verbs that end in -ss, -sh, -ch, -x, and -o.
Kiss kisses, go goes.
3. Verbs that end in a consonant + y changes to -ies.
Carry carries, fly flies.
But verbs that end in a vowel + y only add -s.
Buy buys, say says
4. Have : has

Adverbs of frequency and time expressions

We often use adverbs of frequency with the present simple.
(0%) Never rarely not often sometimes often
usually always (100%)

They go before the main verb:

- I **usually** go to bed at eleven o'clock.
- I don't **often** go swimming.
- Does she **usually** go to the gym?

But after the verb **to be**:

- He is **never** late for school.
- He isn't **always** late for school.
- Is he **always** late for school?

Sometimes and **usually** can also come at the beginning of the sentence or the end.

- **Sometimes** we play cards.
- We play cards **sometimes**.

Other frequency expressions are placed at the end of the sentence (also found at the beginning):

Every day/week/month/year/Monday ...

- He phones me **every day**.

Once/twice/three times a week / month / year.....

- He goes to the gym **once a week**.

Present Continuous

The present Continuous is used:

1. to express an activity that is happening now.
Ex. You can't speak to Jane. She *is having* a bath
2. to express an activity or situation that is true now, but it is not necessarily happening at the moment of speaking.
Ex. Don't take that book. Peter *is reading* it.
3. To express a temporary activity.
Ex. *I'm living* with my friends until I find a place of my own.
4. To express a planned future arrangement.
Ex. We *are meeting* at one outside the restaurant.
5. To describe an annoying habit. A frequency adverb is necessary.
Ex. You *are always borrowing* money from me.

Time expressions:

- Now, at the moment, at present, nowadays
- today, tonight, this week / month..., next week..., on Monday....

Rules for the –ing form:

1. The normal rule is to add -ing to the base form of the verb.
Go going, wear wearing
2. Verbs that end in one -e lose the -e.
smoke smoking, come coming

But verbs that end in -ee don't lose an -e.
Agree agreeing, see seeing
3. In verbs of one syllable, with one vowel and one consonant, the consonant is doubled.
Stop stopping, get getting

But if the final consonant is -y or -w, it is not doubled.
Play playing, show showing.
4. Be careful with verbs like
lie lying, die dying

Problems with Present Simple and Present Continuous

State verbs

There are some verbs that are usually only used in the Present Simple. This is because their meanings are related to states or conditions which are facts and not activities.

These verbs are:

- **Verbs of thinking and opinion:** believe, think, understand, suppose, expect, agree, doubt, know, remember, forget, mean, imagine, realize, deserve, prefer.
- **Verbs of emotion and feeling:** like, love, hate, care, hope, wish, want, admit.
- **Verbs of having and being:** belong, own, have, possess, contain, cost, seem, appear, need, depend on, weigh, come from, resemble.
- **Verbs of the senses:** look, hear, taste, smell, feel

Some of these verbs can be used in the present continuous, but with a change of meaning. In the Continuous, the verb expresses an activity, not a state.

- I think you are right. (= opinion)
- We are thinking of going to the cinema. (= considering, mental activity)
- He has a lot of money (= possession)
- She is having a bath (= activity)
- I see what you mean (= understand)
- Are you seeing Peter tomorrow? (= activity)
- The soup tastes awful(= state)
- I'm tasting the soup to see if it needs salt (= activity)
- Tim is naughty. (= state)
- Tim is being rather difficult at the moment. (= behave)

The difference between Simple and Continuous can be one of attitude:

- Do you sleep a lot? (your general habit)
- Are you sleeping enough? (your situation at the moment)