

## Explanations

### Present simple

- Facts which are always true  
The present simple is used to describe permanent facts, for example in science and geographical descriptions.

*The light from the Sun **takes** 8 mins 20 secs to reach the Earth.*

*The River Po **flows** into the Adriatic Sea.*

The present simple is also used for situations that are generally true.

*I **work** in an office and **live** in a flat in the suburbs.*

- Habitual actions

The present simple is used to describe habits and routines. A frequency adverb is often used.

*I usually **take** the bus to work.*

- Summary of events

The present simple can be used to make a summary of the events in a narrative, for example in a film or book. It can also be used for a table of historical events.

*In Chapter 1, Susan meets David, and **agrees** to go to the school dance with him.*

*In 1789 the French Revolution **begins**.*

### Present continuous

- Actions which are in progress now

The present continuous is used to describe actions which are temporary and not yet finished.

*I'm **doing** the washing-up.*

The action may be happening right now, or around now.

*I'm **reading** one of the Harry Potter books at the moment.*

- Habits during a temporary situation

The present continuous can describe a habit that happens over a short period of time. A time expression is necessary.

*At the moment we're **sending** all the mail by courier, because the Post Office is on strike.*

- A repeated temporary action

The present continuous can describe a single action that is repeated. A time expression is necessary.

*Whenever I see Tom he's **smoking**.*

*You're **making** the same mistake again!*

In examples like this we are often exaggerating or complaining. This is particularly true when we use *always*.

*You're **always borrowing** money from me!*

Problems with simple and continuous

- Some verbs are not normally used in the continuous form, because they describe activities which already extend in time. These are called 'state' verbs.

*be, believe, cost, depend, have, hear, know, matter, smell, suppose, taste, think, understand*

- Some of these verbs can be used in continuous forms with a change of meaning.

*Tim is being rather difficult at the moment.* (behave)

*I'm having breakfast.* (eat)

*I'm tasting the soup, to check if it needs more salt.* (sample)

*I'm thinking of buying a new car.* (consider)

- In many situations we can use either a simple or continuous form. The simple form is for a permanent situation or general habit, the continuous form is for a temporary situation.

*I live in London.* (it's my permanent home)

*I'm living in London.* (just for a year - my home is in Athens)

*Do you sleep a lot?* (Is it your habit?)

*Are you sleeping enough?* (What is happening at the moment?)