

Present continuous and present simple 1

A

State verbs

Reminder → A1–A5

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

- Ella **stays** with us quite often. The children **love** having her here. *and*
- Ella'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**.

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 app **doesn't appear** to work on my phone. (appear: *state* = seem) *and*
- Carley Robb **is currently appearing** in a musical on Broadway. / She often **appears** in musicals. (appear: *action* = take part)

Also: **cost, expect, feel, fit, have, imagine, measure, think, weigh**

C

Mental state verbs

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've made the decision and I'm sorry about it) *and*
- I'm **regretting** my decision to give her the job. (= I'm increasingly aware that it was the wrong decision)

When it means 'think carefully about', **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

Performatives

We use the present simple with verbs which perform the action they describe (= performatives):

- I **suggest** you park outside the city and get the bus to the centre.
- We **request** that you read the terms and conditions carefully before signing.

Also: **acknowledge, admit, advise, apologise, beg, confess, congratulate, declare, deny, forbid, guarantee, name, order, permit, predict, promise, refuse, remind, request, thank, warn**

Some verbs used as performatives with the present simple 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 Miguel said it would be okay.

Modals are often used with performatives 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.

Exercises

1.1 Complete each pair of sentences using the same verb (in a question form or negative if necessary) from the box. Use the present continuous; if this is not possible, use the present simple. Use \wedge to add any words outside the gap and use contracted forms where appropriate.

A & B

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

- 1 a I hear you're having your house repainted. How \wedge it ^{'s} looking...? (or How \wedge it ^{does} look...?)
b I bought this new dress today. How \wedge 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 Carlos 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 Anna, 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's new song 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 Poulson treatment for a knee injury, but should be fit to play on Saturday.
b My sister long blonde hair. You're bound to recognise her.

1.2 Cross out any improbable answers. C & D

Dear Aunt Mara,

Thanks for your message. I (1) *apologise / 'm apologising* for not getting back to you sooner, but I've been incredibly busy. When I went into nursing, you warned me that it would be really hard work, but I (2) *admit / 'm admitting* that I didn't really believe you. Don't get me wrong – I (3) *don't suggest / 'm not suggesting* that I'm not enjoying it. It's incredibly rewarding, but I (4) *now realise / 'm now realising* how hard the job is. When I get home I just eat (not very well, I (5) *confess / 'm confessing*) and go straight to bed. It doesn't help that the bus journey to the hospital is so slow. I (6) *consider / 'm considering* buying a car, which will make things easier, I hope.

And what about you? How (7) *do you find / are you finding* living in a village after so many years in the city? I (8) *know / 'm knowing* how difficult it is for you to travel such a long way, but it would be lovely if you could come and stay with me for a weekend. I've got plenty of room in my flat. I (9) *don't guarantee / 'm not guaranteeing* to cook as well as you do, but I (10) *promise / 'm promising* to find time to show you around this lovely old town.

Hope to see you soon. Keep in touch.

Love,
Martina