

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

The Present Continuous is formed by adding '**ing**' to the verb, which is preceded by some form of the 'to be' verb- **Am/is/are**:

For instance:

- I **am** talking.
- He **is** slowly **learning** to speak French.

Adverbs come between the 'to be' verb and the main verb (is **slowly** learning).

We often use the **Present Continuous** to demonstrate that an action is taking place **right now**. We also use this tense to indicate that something is **not happening now** when it, perhaps, should be.

For example:

- He **is eating** lunch. He **is not doing** his work

However, in English '**now**' has a variety of meanings. It can mean '**this second**', '**in a few minutes**', '**in 20 minutes**', '**this afternoon**', '**this month**' or even '**this year**'- when we are talking about longer actions, which are in progress.

I often find it useful to make a distinction between the two by saying '**right now**' or '**in general**'. The following role play should make this clear.

Charlotte: I'm just **going to call** Chris to ask him whether he's still free this afternoon.

Oh no; I'm **calling** the wrong Chris!

Chris: Hi A, how are you? It's been such a long time.

Charlotte: Yes, hasn't it? I'm really well. How about you?

Chris: I'm OK. What **are you doing** now?

Charlotte: Ummm, do you mean *right now* or *in general*?

Chris: I mean in general, actually.

Charlotte: Well... lots of things. I'm **learning** to drive because I thought it was about time! I'm also **working** in finance now, which is insanely stressful. I'm actually at work right now. How about you?

Chris: Well, right now I'm **driving** my kids to school, but in general I'm **working** as an architect, which I'm really **enjoying**. I'm also **training** to become a pilot, which is a life long ambition for me.

Charlotte: Brilliant. That sounds exciting. I'm **reading** an amazing book about a famous pilot at the moment, which is really interesting. I've completely forgotten

what it's called. Unfortunately, I don't have it with me right now, so I can't check, but I'll email you the details when I get home.

Chris: That would be great. What else are you up to?

Charlotte: Well, we're **extending** the house at the moment, which is a task and a half. The builders **are laying** down some wooden flooring, as we speak. We're about half way through the process now and it feels as though it's never going to be finished.

Chris: Oh dear. I'm sure it will be worth the wait though. What's your sister **doing** at the moment?

Charlotte: She's **travelling** at the moment. She's **exploring** the South Pacific, but she's actually **living** in Canada these days. She's **running** her own gallery now.

Chris: That must be great for her.

Charlotte: Yes, she's really **enjoying** it. She's **working** with 3 other people, so the pressure is shared, which is a help. How about your brother; what's he **doing** now?

Chris: Well, that is a story and a half. He quit his job last month and moved in with me to save money and now he's **working** as a model. He's actually **topping** up his tan in our garden, as we speak!

Charlotte: That does sound exciting... As I said, I'm **working** right now, but it would be really nice to catch up and hear about all these exciting things you're **doing** at the moment.

Chris: Yes, let's get together soon. Take care.

Charlotte: You too. Bye!

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We also use the **Present Continuous** when talking about something that is **due** to take place in the **near future**.

The **near future** includes; **today, tonight after work, this weekend, this week, next weekend...**

Examples:

- I'm **going** running after work today.
- I'm **cooking** tonight.
- I'm **travelling** this week.
- I'm **taking** time off work this weekend.
- I'm **visiting** my parents next weekend.

The following role play outlines when best to use this tense:

Amy is on the phone to a guy she met at a friends party the previous weekend.

Amy: Hello
Sean: Hi, it's Sean. I was just wondering what you're **doing** tomorrow afternoon?
Amy: Oh hi, how are you?
Sean: I'm well thanks. How about you?
Amy: I'm OK. I'm actually **going** to the cinema with some friends tomorrow afternoon?
Sean: Oh, that's a shame. I thought you might like to meet up. What **are you doing** this evening?
Amy: Sorry, I'm busy this evening too... I'm **having** an Italian lesson from 7 until 9.30...
Sean: Now, that is a shame. How **am I going** to cope?
Amy: I'm sure you'll be fine.
Sean: I'm not so sure. How about tomorrow?
Amy: Sorry, I'm **working** tomorrow during the day then I'm **visiting** an old friend...
Sean: (sigh) I hope I get extra points for being so persistent. How about Sunday? Is there a window of opportunity?
Amy: Actually, I'm going to be quite busy. I'm **having** a driving lesson at 11, **meeting** a friend for lunch at 2 and then my Mum's **cooking** me dinner...
Sean: You're right that is a busy schedule, but I think I can see two potential windows- one at 9 for breakfast and one at 4 or 5 for afternoon tea?
Amy: (laughter) Sorry, but I don't eat breakfast and I certainly don't drink tea... but I think I might make an exception, as you asked so nicely.
Sean: Brilliant, so we're **having** breakfast at 9 and coffee at 5!
Amy: OK, I'll see you on Sunday. Sorry, I really do have to go now. I'm **having** my hair cut this afternoon.
Sean: OK, see you on Sunday!
Amy: OK, Take care. Bye.

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It is also possible to express **repetition** or **irritation** by using the Continuous. This can be done by inserting adverbs such as '**always**' between the 'to be verb' and 'verb+ ing'. Irritation is often made known by someone's tone of voice.

For instance:

- He **is** always **forgetting** his wallet
- She **is** always **shopping**
- He **is** constantly **telling** jokes

The following discussion demonstrates both of these concepts.

Nicky: I'm going to have to break up with him. I can't stand the way he's always **boasting**.

Jessica: Really?!

Nicky: Yes, he's always **saying** how rich... and wonderful he is!

Jessica: Yes, I can see how that could be annoying, but you're always **saying** how much you like a confident man who can see his own strengths.

Nicky: Yes, you're right and I think I could cope with his arrogance if he **wasn't** always **putting** me down.

Jessica: Oh dear.

Nicky: He's always **telling** me to be more tidy or more feminine!

Jessica: Now, that isn't good.

Nicky: and the worse thing is, he's always **admiring** himself in the mirror. Honestly, I think he spends more time in the bathroom than I do!

Jessica: Hmmmm. Well, I think you know what to do...

Nicky: I know, but he's sweet to me too. He's constantly **sending** me flowers... to apologise for all the horrible things he says.

Jessica: Well, at least he apologises.

Nicky: Yeah, and he's always **taking** me to new and exciting places.

Jessica: That does sound nice... but you're always **complaining** about all the horrible things he does. It sounds to me like he's constantly **making** things up to you, which really isn't good.

Nicky: I know. You're right... I hate people who **are** always **complaining**. I don't think I like the idea of becoming one of them.

Jessica: I know... and I feel like I'm always **listening** to your problems when we go out. Wouldn't it be nice just to go out and have fun?

Nicky: You're right. I don't want to be one of those people that **are** always **breaking** up with their boyfriend.

Jessica: and I don't want to be one of those people who's always **picking** up the pieces!

Nicky: I guess that's decided then!