

Lecture 1

The Simple Present Tense in English

The simple present tense in English is used to describe an action that is regular, true or normal. We use the present tense:

1. For repeated or regular actions in the present time period.

-I take the bus to college.

-The train to London leaves every hour.

-Sam sleeps eight hours every night during the week.

2. For facts.

-The moon goes round the earth.

-A cat has four legs.

- Ronaldo comes from Portugal.

3. For habits.

-I get up early every day.

Carla brushes her teeth twice a day.

-They travel to their country house every weekend.

4. For things that are always / generally true.

-It rains a lot in winter.

-The Queen of England lives in Buckingham Palace.

-They speak English at work.

Verb Conjugation & Spelling

We form the present tense using the base form of the infinitive (without the TO).

In general, in the third person we add 'S' in the third person.

Subject + Verb + the Rest of the sentence

I / you / we / they speak / learn/study English at home

he / she / it speaks / learns/ studies English at home

The spelling for the verb in the third person differs depending on the ending of that verb:

1. For verbs that end in -O, -CH, -SH, -SS, -X, or -Z we add -ES in the third person.

go – goes

catch – catches

wash – washes

kiss – kisses

fix – fixes

buzz – buzzes

2. For verbs that end in a consonant + Y, we remove the Y and add -IES.

marry – marries

study – studies

carry – carries

worry – worries

NOTE: For verbs that end in a vowel + Y, we just add -S.

play – plays

enjoy – enjoys

say – says

Negative Sentences in the Simple Present Tense

To make a negative sentence in English we normally use Don't or Doesn't with all verbs EXCEPT To Be and Modal verbs (can, might, should etc.).

Affirmative: You speak French.

Negative: You don't speak French.

You will see that we add don't between the subject and the verb. We use Don't when the subject is I, you, we or they.

Affirmative: He speaks German.

Negative: He doesn't speak German.

When the subject is he, she or it, we add doesn't between the subject and the verb to make a negative sentence. Notice that the letter S at the end of the verb in the affirmative sentence (because it is in third person) disappears in the negative sentence. We will see the reason why below.

Negative Contractions

Don't = Do not

Doesn't = Does not

I don't like meat = I do not like meat.

There is no difference in meaning though we normally use contractions in spoken English.

Word Order of Negative Sentences

The following is the word order to construct a basic negative sentence in English in the Present Tense using Don't or Doesn't.

Subject + don't/doesn't Verb+ the rest of the sentence

I / you / we / they don't have / buy eat / like cereal for breakfast

he / she / it doesn't like tea.

* Verb: The verb that goes here is the base form of the infinitive - the infinitive without TO before the verb. Instead of the infinitive To have it is just the have part.

Remember that the infinitive is the verb before it is conjugated (changed) and it begins with TO. For example: to have, to eat, to go, to live, to speak etc.

Examples of Negative Sentences with Don't and Doesn't:

You don't speak Chinese.

John doesn't speak Italian.

We don't have time for a rest.

It doesn't move.

They don't want to go to the party.

She doesn't like fish.

Questions in the Simple Present Tense

To make a question in English we normally use Do or Does. It has no translation in Spanish though it is essential to show we are making a question. It is normally put at the beginning of the question.

Affirmative: You speak English.

Question: Do you speak English?

You will see that we add DO at the beginning of the affirmative sentence to make it a question. We use Do when the subject is I, you, we or they.

Affirmative: He speaks French.

Question: Does he speak French?

When the subject is he, she or it, we add DOES at the beginning to make the affirmative sentence a question. Notice that the letter S at the end of the verb in the affirmative sentence (because it is in third person) disappears in the question. We will see the reason why below.

We DON'T use Do or Does in questions that have the verb To Be or Modal Verbs (can, must, might, should etc.)

Word Order of Questions with Do and Does

The following is the word order to construct a basic question in English using Do or Does. Do/Does Subject + Verb + The rest of the sentence

Do I / you / we / they have / need want a new bike?

Does he / she / it speak Japanese?

*Verb: The verb that goes here is the base form of the infinitive = The infinitive without TO before the verb. Instead of the infinitive To have it is just the have part.

Remember that the infinitive is the verb before it is conjugated (changed) and it begins with TO. For example: to have, to eat, to go, to live, to speak etc.

Examples of Questions with Do and Does:

Do you need a pen?

Does Mark need a dictionary?

Do we have a meeting now?

Does it rain a lot in winter?

Do they want to go to the party?

Does he like pizza?

Short Answers with Do and Does

In questions that use do/does it is possible to give short answers to direct questions as follows:

Do you like chocolate?

Yes, I do.

No, I don't.

Do I need a pencil?

Yes, you do.

No, you don't.

Do you both like chocolate?

Yes, we do.

No, we don't.

Do they like chocolate?

Yes, they do.

No, they don't.

Does he like chocolate?

Yes, he does.

No, he doesn't.

Does she like chocolate?

Yes, she does.

No, she doesn't.

Does it have four wheels?

Yes, it does.

No, it doesn't.