

Lecture 2

The Present Continuous Tense in English

The present continuous (also called present progressive) is a verb tense which is used to show that an ongoing action is happening now, either at the moment of speech or now in a larger sense. The present continuous can also be used to show that an action is going to take place in the near future

Present Continuous Forms

The present continuous is formed using *am/is/are* + **present participle**. Questions are indicated by inverting the subject and *am/is/are*. Negatives are made with *not*.

- Statement: They **are watching** TV.
- Question: **Are** they **watching** TV?
- Negative: They **are not watching** TV.

Present Continuous Uses

USE 1: Now

The present continuous is used with normal verbs to express the idea that something is happening now, at this very moment. It can also be used to show that something is not happening now.

Examples:

- You **are studying** English now.
- You **are not swimming** now.
- **Are you sleeping?**
- I **am sitting**.
- I **am not standing**.
- **Is she sitting or standing?**
- They **are reading** their books.
- They **are not watching** television.
- What **are you doing?**
- Why **aren't you doing** your homework?

USE 2: Longer Actions in Progress Now

In English, "now" can mean: this moment, today, this month, this year, this century, and so on. Sometimes, we use the present continuous to say that we are in the process of doing a longer action which is in progress; however, we might not be doing it at this exact second.

Examples: (All of these sentences can be said while eating dinner in a restaurant.)

- I **am studying** to become a doctor.
- I **am not studying** to become a dentist.
- I **am reading** the novel *Women in Love*.
- I **am not reading** any books right now.
- **Are you working** on any special projects at work?
- **Aren't you teaching** at the university now?

- **Watch out!/Look/ A car is coming.**

USE 3: Near Future

Sometimes, speakers use the present continuous to indicate that something will or will not happen in the near future.

Examples:

- I **am meeting** some friends after work.
- I **am not going** to the party tonight.
- **Is he visiting** his parents next weekend?
- **Isn't he coming** with us tonight?

USE 4: Repetition and Irritation with "Always"

The present continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happens. Notice that the meaning is like **simple present**, but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb+ing."

Examples:

- She **is always coming** to class late.
- He **is constantly talking**. I wish he would shut up.
- I don't like them because they **are always complaining**.