

# STATE AND ACTIVITY VERBS



# There are two kinds of verbs in English:

## **Activity verbs –**

describe activities  
and they can be used  
in **simple** and  
**continuous** tenses.

## **□ State verbs –**

describe states and  
can only be used in  
**simple** tenses. They  
can't be used in  
continuous tenses.

walk , talk, eat, drink... hate, understand,  
want...

# State verbs:

- **Verbs related to activities of the mind:**

admit, agree, believe, know, mean, prefer,  
realise, remember, think, understand, want

- **Verbs related to emotions:**

adore, care, like, dislike, love, hate, hope

- **Having or being:**

appear, be, belong, contain, have, include, need,  
seem, possess, own


- **Verbs related to senses:**

feel, hear, look, see, smell, sound, taste...

Some state verbs can also refer to an activity. In this meaning they can be used in a continuous tense.


## □ HAVE

We have a second-hand car. (have = it's my car  state)

We are having some tea. (have = drink  activity)

## □ THINK

I think it's a great idea. (think = my opinion  state)

I'm thinking about my exam. (think = a process of my thoughts  activity)

# Verbs related to senses can refer to actions, not a physical ability or sense.

- The coffee **smells great**.
- Martha **is smelling** the roses in her garden.
- You **look nice**.
- I **am looking** at you and smiling.
- That soup **tastes awful**.
- The experts **are tasting** French wines today.

Most state verbs can be used in continuous tenses as an exception, to express strong positive or negative emotions

- **I'm loving** it! = "I REALLY love it"
- **She is hating** the way he speaks to waiters, it is so rude! = "She hates is VERY MUCH"

Remember that these cases are **ONLY**  
**EXCEPTIONS!**