

Result (Grammar)Unit 4  
present simple and present  
continuous

## Overview

- 1 We generally use continuous tenses to describe temporary situations:

*It's snowing.*

*I've been getting a lot of headaches recently.*

We generally use simple tenses to state facts:

*It snows a lot in Finland.*

*I've never had toothache.*

- 2 We generally use simple tenses for very short actions or events:

*The bomb exploded.*

We generally use continuous tenses for things happening over a longer time:

*We noticed that the boat was sinking.*

- 3 We often use continuous tenses to talk about duration (how long):

*She has been directing films since the age of twenty.*

We never use continuous tenses to say how many times something happens, will happen, has happened, etc:

*By the end of this year, she will have made twelve films.*

- 4 Continuous tenses are normally used for actions or events, rather than states:

*Please be quiet, I'm reading. (action)*

We normally use simple tenses for states:

*These books belong to the library. (state)*

## Non-continuous verbs

Some verbs are not used in continuous tenses. These include:

### 1 mental states

*believe doubt hate know like love  
prefer realise recognise regret remember  
suppose understand want*

### 2 communication

*agree disagree mean*

### 3 other verbs

*belong contain cost depend fit matter  
need owe own possess seem*

Some verbs are non-continuous with some meanings but not with others. For example, *think* is not used in continuous tenses when it means 'have an opinion':

*I think reality TV shows are boring.*

**BUT** *I'm thinking about my last holiday.*

#### Non-continuous

#### Continuous

I feel I should tell her  
the truth.  
(believe)

I'm feeling unwell.

My cousin has a Porsche.  
(possess)

Where are we having lunch?

Does this fish taste funny?  
(have a flavour)

He burnt his mouth while  
he was tasting the soup.

I don't see the point of this.  
(understand)

We're seeing the doctor  
at 1.00.

Do you consider yourself  
an adult?  
(believe)

The council is considering  
closing the leisure centre.

I imagine we'll eat out.  
(think)

He was imagining what it  
would be like to be rich.

The shop appears to be  
closed.  
(seem)

Kevin Spacey is appearing  
on stage in London next  
week.

## The present simple

We use the present simple

- 1 to talk about a habitual or repeated action or event:

*My grandfather runs 3km every morning.*

- 2 to state a general fact:

*Koala bears sleep more than 20 hours a day.*

- 3 for actions and events in a story, especially when describing the plot of a book, film, etc:

*Scout goes to school for the first time that autumn and has a terrible day.*

- 4 with verbs not used in continuous tenses (see non-continuous verbs in previous column).

- 5 to refer to a future action or event that is part of a timetable:

*The next train to Manchester leaves in ten minutes.*

# The present continuous

We use the present continuous

- 1 to talk about an action or event that is in progress now:

*Put the umbrella up, it's raining.*

- 2 to talk about an action or event which is repeated, but only around this time:

*I'm drinking too much coffee these days.*

- 3 to talk about a temporary situation:

*My brother's working in China. (He normally works in France.)*

- 4 to talk about changes in a situation:

*Air travel is getting cheaper.*

- 5 (with always) to complain about annoying behaviour:

*That dog is always jumping on the sofa.*

- 6 to refer to a future action or event that has been arranged:

*Which country is hosting the next Olympics?*



**1** Name the tenses in italics in a–k and choose the correct one to complete each sentence.

- a Yesterday evening, we *were having/had* dinner and watched a film on television.
- b I don't usually like desserts, but this ice-cream *is tasting/tastes* wonderful.
- c The sun *was rising/rose* by the time they finally got to bed.
- d Our team *are playing/play* well, but the score is still 0–0.
- e Your face is red. *Have you been sitting/Have you sat* in the sun?
- f Since his first film in 1984, Johnny Depp *has been playing/has played* many different roles.
- g This time next week, *I'll be sitting/sit* on a beach in the Caribbean.
- h It's a good story, but I'm *not believing/don't believe* that it's true!
- i Can we stop for a while? We've *been walking/'ve walked* since 10 o'clock this morning!
- j If you don't study hard for these exams, you'll *be regretting/'ll regret* it.
- k I *always leave/I'm always leaving* my keys at home. I'm so forgetful.

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- a past continuous/past simple *had dinner*
- b present continuous/present simple *tastes*
- c past continuous/past simple *was rising*
- d present continuous/present simple *are playing*
- e present perfect continuous/  
present perfect simple *Have you been sitting*
- f present perfect continuous/  
present perfect simple *has played*
- g future continuous/future simple *I'll be sitting*
- h present continuous/present simple *I don't believe*
- i present perfect continuous/  
present perfect simple *We've been walking*
- j future continuous/future simple *you'll regret*
- k present simple/present continuous *I'm always leaving*

- 2** Read quotations a–e and correct any continuous forms which should be simple forms, as in the example.

*I think*  
**Example** ~~'I'm thinking~~ a pillow should be the peace symbol, not the dove. The pillow has more feathers than the dove, and it isn't having a beak to peck you with.'

- a Everywhere is within walking distance if you're having the time.
- b I'm remembering when the candle shop burned down. Everyone was standing around singing 'Happy Birthday'.
- c I've had a poor memory for as long as I'm remembering.
- d I bought a new Japanese car. When I turn on the radio, I'm not understanding a word they're saying.
- e There are two types of people in this world, good and bad. The good are sleeping better, but the bad are seeming to enjoy the waking hours much more.



A photograph of a desert landscape. A dark asphalt road with two yellow lines curves through the scene, flanked by sand dunes and sparse desert vegetation. The sky is a clear, pale blue. Overlaid on the image is a quote in white text on a dark red background.

Everywhere is walking  
distance if you have the time.

Steven Wright

quote fancy

A dramatic landscape photograph showing a wide river winding through a valley, with a prominent dark rock formation in the foreground. The background features rolling hills and mountains under a sky filled with large, dark clouds illuminated from below by a low sun, creating a warm orange and yellow glow.

**I remember when the candle shop  
burned down. Everyone stood  
around singing 'Happy Birthday.'**

Steven Wright



**I have always had a bad memory,  
as far back as I can remember.**

Lewis Thomas

 quotezency

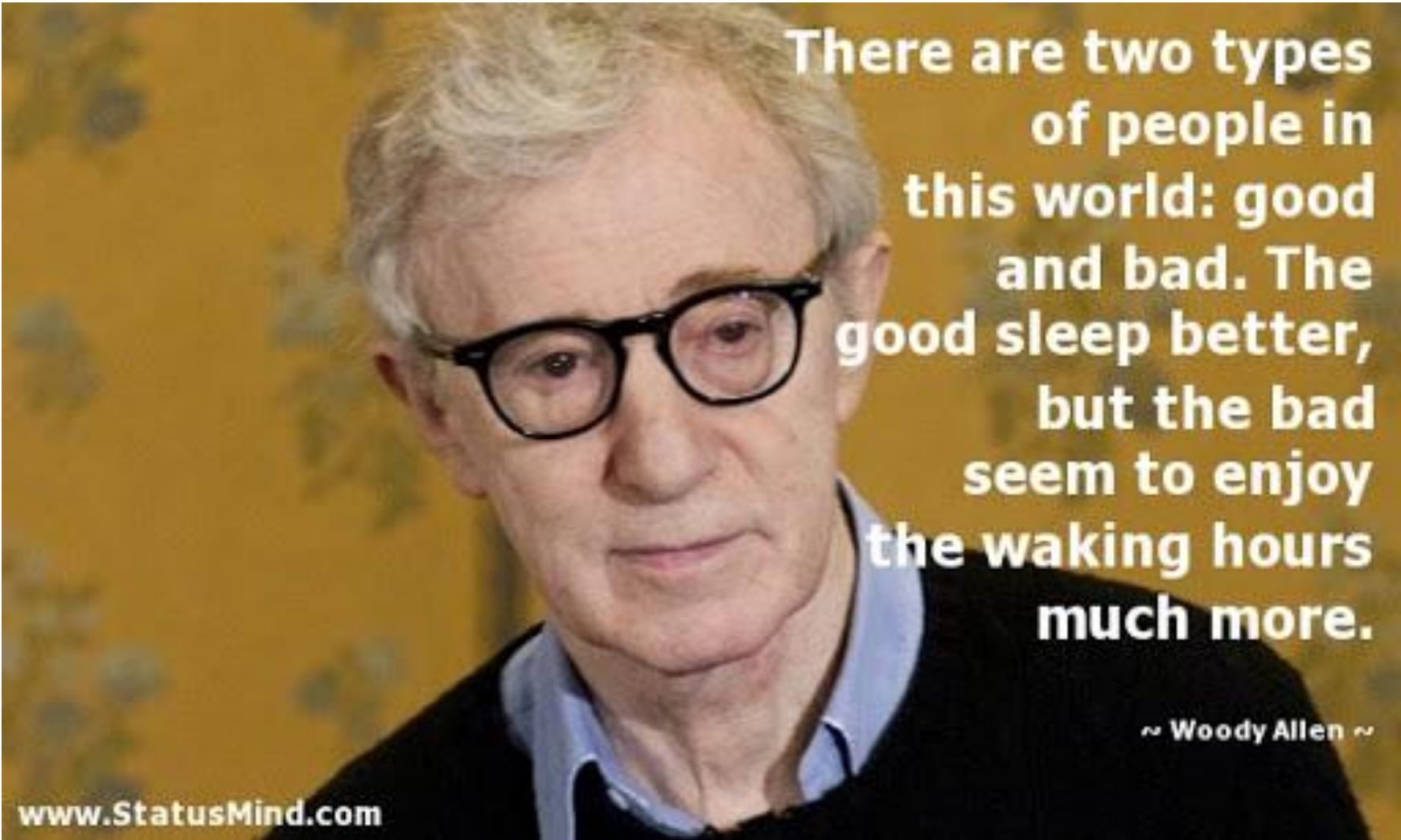
I bought a new Japanese  
car, I turned on the radio ...  
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they're saying.

Rodney Dangerfield

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PICTUREQUOTES.COM



A portrait of Woody Allen, an older man with white hair and black-rimmed glasses, wearing a dark sweater over a light blue collared shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a textured, mottled yellow and brown. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a quote in white, bold, sans-serif font. The quote reads: "There are two types of people in this world: good and bad. The good sleep better, but the bad seem to enjoy the waking hours much more." Below the quote, on the right, is the attribution "~ Woody Allen ~". In the bottom left corner, the website "www.StatusMind.com" is written in white.

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of people in  
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~ Woody Allen ~

**3** Compare these pairs of sentences and explain the difference in meaning between the verbs in *italic*.

a I *don't see* why you can't help me with my homework.

They *aren't seeing* each other – they're just good friends.

b What *do you think* of Tarantino's latest film?  
We're *thinking* of going to the cinema tomorrow night.

c Our teacher *feels* that we're working harder this year.

We're *feeling* optimistic about the exam.

d You smile a lot when you *have* a baby.  
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a *see* means 'understand' in the first sentence and 'have a relationship with' in the second.

b *think* means 'have an opinion' in the first sentence and 'intend/have a plan' in the second.

c *feel* means 'think/have an opinion' in the first sentence and 'experience an emotion' in the second.

d *have* means 'possess' in the first sentence and 'give birth to' in the second.



- 4 Complete the dialogue by putting the verbs in brackets into the correct tense (future, present or present perfect, simple or continuous).

**Joanna** You .....<sup>1</sup> (sit) on that sofa since lunch-time. What ..... you .....<sup>2</sup> (do)?

**Wesley** A crossword.

**Joanna** You .....<sup>3</sup> (always do) crosswords!

**Wesley** Well, I .....<sup>4</sup> (enjoy) them. Anyway, I .....<sup>5</sup> (finish) it soon, if you .....<sup>6</sup> (let) me concentrate!

**Joanna** I .....<sup>7</sup> (never like) crosswords.

**Wesley** Sshhh! I .....<sup>8</sup> (think)! Four across, 'get better' ...

**Joanna** 'Improve'. Seems pretty easy to me.

**Wesley** They aren't all that easy. I .....<sup>9</sup> (have) trouble with some of them. For example, can you think of a word that .....<sup>10</sup> (mean) 'magnificent'?

**Joanna** 'Wonderful'?

**Wesley** No, it .....<sup>11</sup> (not fit). Eight letters.

**Joanna** Oh, I .....<sup>12</sup> (know). It's 'splendid'.

**Wesley** Whatabout this one – a small insect that .....<sup>13</sup> (bite)?

**Joanna** A mosquito?

**Wesley** That's it! I .....<sup>14</sup> (do) it!



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1 've been sitting

2 are you doing/have you been doing

3 are always doing

4 enjoy

5 'll finish/'ll have finished

6 let

7 've never liked

8 'm thinking

9 'm having/'ve been having

10 means

11 doesn't fit

12 know

13 bites

14 've done

**5** Complete questions a–e with an appropriate verb and tense (simple or continuous). Then discuss the questions in pairs.

a What ..... you ..... this evening?

b How long ..... you ..... English?

c What ..... you usually ..... on Saturday evenings?

d Where do you think you ..... in ten years' time?

e What ..... you ..... when the teacher came into the room?

**5** Complete questions a–e with an appropriate verb and tense (simple or continuous). Then discuss the questions in pairs.

- a What ..... you ..... this evening?
- b How long ..... you ..... English?
- c What ..... you usually ..... on Saturday evenings?
- d Where do you think you ..... in ten years' time?
- e What ..... you ..... when the teacher came into the room?

- a What **are** you **doing** this evening?
- b How long **have** you **been learning** English?
- c What do you usually **do** on Saturday evenings?
- d Where do you think you'll **be**/you'll **be living** in ten years' time?
- e What **were** you **doing/did** you **do/had** you **been doing** when the teacher came into the room?

[https://www.englishrevealed.co.uk/FCE/fce\\_grammar/present\\_continuous\\_present\\_simple\\_3.php](https://www.englishrevealed.co.uk/FCE/fce_grammar/present_continuous_present_simple_3.php)

<https://www.baamboozle.com/game/2461>



# Simple and continuous tenses

- 1 Choose the best ending, a or b, for each of 1–7.

- 1 Do you know how many times I've  
a been trying to call you today?  
b tried to call you today?
- 2 Every evening, before going to bed, Jenny  
a is phoning her boyfriend.  
b phones her boyfriend.
- 3 It was evening, and the birds  
a were singing.  
b sang.
- 4 Mrs Wilson closed her book, looked up at her husband, and  
a was smiling.  
b smiled.
- 5 How long have you  
a been waiting for me?  
b waited for me?
- 6 By the time we find the restaurant, they won't  
a be serving dinner.  
b serve dinner.
- 7 I can't see you tomorrow because  
a I'm going to the theatre.  
b I go to the theatre.

- 2 For each pair a–f, choose the word which cannot normally be used in continuous tenses.

- |           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| a argue   | disagree |
| b enjoy   | like     |
| c doubt   | hesitate |
| d cost    | pay      |
| e keep    | own      |
| f realise | learn    |

- 3 Read the email below. Underline 10 mistakes with simple and continuous tenses, then correct them.

Dear Fiona

How are you? I hope your cold is better and you're feeling OK now. Maybe you're needing a holiday.

I really enjoy my first term at university. I'm now in the fifth week, and I've been making three or four really good friends already. My room-mate, Hans, is one of them. He's coming from Germany. We've got loads in common, and it's feeling as though I've been knowing him forever! The only problem with Hans is that he's liking listening to loud music in the evening when I'm trying to read, but he's always turning it down when I ask him to.

I'll come home just for a couple of days next month to see my aunt, who will be over from the States. I'm not sure exactly when – it's depending on my exams – but I doubt it will be before 15th. It would be great to meet up, if you're free.

Best wishes

Luke

- 4 Complete each pair of sentences in a–e with the verb given. Use an appropriate simple tense in one sentence and a continuous tense in the other.

Example see

I'm seeing your cousin tomorrow night.

Now I see why you wanted to come to this club!

a have

Don't phone me between 8 and 9 o'clock tomorrow evening.

I \_\_\_\_\_ dinner.

When I buy my own house, I \_\_\_\_\_ two cats and a dog.

b feel

Your work hasn't been very good recently. \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ tired?

After our argument last week, I \_\_\_\_\_ that Leslie and I could no longer be friends.

c imagine

I thought I heard somebody outside the door, but when I opened it, there was nobody there. Perhaps I \_\_\_\_\_ things.

I \_\_\_\_\_ that my grandfather will retire soon now that he's turned 60.

d consider

Many people \_\_\_\_\_ Pele to be the greatest footballer ever.

Margaret \_\_\_\_\_ giving up university at the end of this term and getting a job.

e appear

Two Hollywood stars \_\_\_\_\_ in plays in London next week.

The leading actor \_\_\_\_\_ unhappy in his role and is trying to leave the production.