

2

present simple, present continuous (2)

more uses of present simple

Present simple is also used

- in informal spoken instructions, with *you*.

You open this part of the camera here. Then you take out the battery.

Formal written instructions such as recipes use the imperative form.

Take 300g of flour. Add three eggs.

- in newspaper headlines to describe events. There are other conventions for writing headlines, such as leaving out articles, and active verbs, and preferring short words.

Three **die** in plane crash.

MPs **say** no to green laws.

- for performative verbs *accept, apologize, dare, deny, understand, see* (with a meaning of 'understand') etc. These are verbs which, when used in present simple, describe an action as the word is spoken.

I agree with you. I accept your offer.

I understand. I see.

Thank you,
I accept your offer



- for verbs reporting news: *gather, hear, see, tell, say, understand*.

I hear you've got a new job.

People tell me she's difficult to work with.

We understand that the house is now for sale.

(See Unit 19, reporting verbs)

- in *here comes, there goes, here lies*.

These expressions include inversion of verb and subject.

Here comes trouble! There goes a brave man!

Here lies John Smith. (written on a tomb)

colloquial narrative and commentary

Although narrative generally uses past tenses, there are uses of present simple and present continuous in everyday speech.

- In jokes, present simple can be used instead of past simple for narrative events, and present continuous for past continuous.

A man goes to see his psychiatrist. He says he is having problems because he imagines he's a pair of curtains. The psychiatrist tells him to pull himself together.

- In sports commentaries, present simple is often used to describe events happening as the commentator speaks.

And now Rooney crosses the half-way line and passes to Giggs.

Present continuous is also used in commentaries for continuous and changing events.

And the two Italians are moving up in the outside lane.

- Plot summaries in films and books are generally in present simple.

*Tom and Daisy **are** an old couple who **live** a dull life in a suburb of Birmingham. But everything **changes** when their granddaughter Karen **comes** to stay.*

summary of meaning in the continuous

- verbs that describe activities which continue for some time, eg *play, rain, read, work, write* etc

***It's raining.** The children **are playing** upstairs.*

Note that the activity may not be going on at the exact moment of speaking.

***I'm reading** Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. (I haven't finished it yet, but I'm not reading at this moment)*

- verbs that describe a changing situation, eg *change, get + adjective, grow, increase* etc

***It's getting** dark. Computers **are changing** all the time.*

repeated actions with *continually* etc

In everyday speech we can use present continuous with an adverb such as *continually, forever, constantly, always* to criticize actions that we feel are irritating or annoying, or which we wish to exaggerate. The adverb is usually stressed in speech.

*You **are continually** interrupting!*

*He's **forever** getting into trouble!*



simple or continuous?

In some cases, the choice between simple and continuous is part of the attitude of the writer or speaker, especially in explanations and descriptions of situations.

*Professor Thorne explains that some patients **eat** too much because they **grow up** in families with poor eating habits.*

*Professor Thorne explains that some patients **are eating** too much because they **are growing up** in families with poor eating habits.*

The first example (present simple) describes something that is generally true, the second (present continuous) describes something more temporary or something not always the case.