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***Form***

*The present continuous tense is formed with the present tense of the auxiliary verb be + the present participle:*

***Affirmative Negative Interrogative***

I am working I am not working am I working?

you are working you are not working are you working?

he/she/it is working he/she/it is not working is he/she/it working?

we are working we are not working are we working?

you are working you are not working are you working?

they are working they are not working are they working?

***Affirmative Negative Negative interrogative***

I’m working I'm not working aren't I working?

you're working you're not/you aren't working aren't you working?

he's working etc. he's not/he isn't working etc. isn't he working? etc.

**Wh Questions:** Why's he working? Where're you working?

**The spelling of the present participle**

**A** When a verb ends in a single **e**, this **e** is dropped before **ing**:

*argue, arguing hate, haling love, loving*

except after **age, dye** and **singe**:

*ageing dyeing singeing*

and verbs ending in **ee**:

*agree, agreeing see, seeing*

**B** When a verb of one syllable has one vowel and ends in a single consonant, this consonant is doubled before **ing**:

*hit, hitting run, running stop, stopping*

Verbs of two or more syllables whose last syllable contains only one vowel and ends in a single consonant double this consonant if the stress falls on the last syllable:

*admit, admitting begin, beginning prefer, preferring*

but

*budget, budgeting enter, entering*

(stress not on the last syllable).

A final l after a single vowel is, however, always doubled:

*signal, signalling travel, travelling*

except in American English.

**C** **ing** can be added to a verb ending in **y** without affecting the spelling of the verb:

*carry, carrying enjoy, enjoying hurry, hurrying*

**Uses of the present continuous tense**

**A For an action happening now:**

*It is raining.*

*I am mil wearing a coat as it isn't cold.*

*Why are you sitting at my desk?*

*What's the baby doing? ~ He's tearing up a £5 note.*

**B For an action happening about this time but not necessarily at the moment of speaking:**

*I am reading a play by Shaw.* (This may mean 'at the moment of speaking' but may also mean 'now' in a more general sense.)

*He is teaching French and learning Greek.* (He may not be doing either at the moment of speaking.)

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**C For a definite arrangement in the near future** (the most usual way of expressing one's immediate plans):

*I'm meeting Peter tonight. He is taking me to the theatre.*

*Are you doing anything tomorrow afternoon? ~ Yes, I'm playing tennis with Ann.*

Note that the time of the action must always be mentioned, as otherwise there might be confusion between present and future meanings, come and go, however, can be used in this way without a time expression.

**D With always:**

*He is* ***always*** *losing his keys.*

This form is used, chiefly in the affirmative: For a frequently repeated action, usually when the frequency annoys the speaker or seems unreasonable to him:

*Tom is always going away for weekends* (present continuous) would imply that he goes away very often, probably too often in the speaker's opinion.

Compare with **always** + simple present:

*Tom always goes away at weekends = Tom goes away every weekend.* (a literal statement)

**I/we + always** + continuous tense is also possible here. The repeated action is then often accidental:

*I'm always making that mistake.*

For an action which appears to be continuous:

*He's always working = He works the whole time.*

**Verbs not normally used in the continuous tenses**

The continuous tenses are chiefly used for deliberate actions. Some verbs are, therefore, not normally used in the continuous and have only one present tense, the simple present. These verbs can be grouped as follows:

**A Verbs of the senses** (involuntary actions): **feel, hear, see, smell**; also **notice** and **observe** (= notice), and **feel**, **look**, **taste** used as link verbs.

Verbs such as **gaze, listen, look** (at), **observe** (= watch), **stare** and **watch** imply deliberate use of the senses, and can, of course, be used in the continuous tenses:

*Watch! ~ l am watching but I don't see anything unusual.*

*He is listening to a tape, but he's wearing earphones so nobody else hears it.*

**B Verbs expressing feelings and emotions,** e.g. **admire** (= respect), **adore, appreciate** (= value), **care for** (= like), **desire, detest, dislike, fear, hate, like, loathe, love, mind** (= care), **respect, value, want, wish**.

But the continuous can be used with admire meaning 'look at with admiration', appreciate meaning 'increase in value', care for meaning 'look after', long for, mind meaning 'look after/concern oneself with', value meaning 'estimate the financial worth of, enjoy and sometimes like/love meaning 'enjoy', and hate meaning the opposite, though it is safer to use the simple tenses with like, love and hate:

*He's enjoying his holiday in the Arctic. He hates tourist places and he doesn't mind the cold.*

*I'm minding my own business.*

*How are you liking/Do you like your new job? ~ I'm hating it/I hate it. I just don't like work, you see.*

**C Verbs of mental activity**, e.g. **agree, appreciate** (= understand), **assume, believe, expect** (= think), **feel** (= think), **feel sure/certain, forget, know, mean, perceive, realize, recall, recognize, recollect, remember, see** (= understand), **see through someone** (= penetrate his attempt to deceive), **suppose, think** (= have an opinion), **trust** (= believe/have confidence in), **understand**. But the continuous can be used with appreciate meaning 'to increase in value'.

**D Verbs of possession:** **belong, owe, own, possess**:

*How much do I owe you?*

**E The auxiliaries, except be and have in certain uses.**

**appear** (= seem), **concern, consist, contain, hold** (= contain) **keep** (= continue), **matter, seem, signify, sound** (= seem/appear):

*It concerns us all. This box contains explosives.*

But appear meaning 'to come before the public' can be used in the continuous.

**feel, look, smell** and **taste** used in the continuous forms

A **feel**

**feel**, when followed by an adjective indicating the subject's emotions or i physical or mental condition, e.g. *angry/pleased, happy/sad, hot/cold, tense/relaxed, nervous/confident*, is normally used in the simple tenses but can also be used in the continuous:

*How do you feel/are you feeling? ~ I feel/am feeling better.*

**feel** meaning 'touch' (usually in order to learn something) can be used in the continuous: *The doctor was feeling her pulse.*

Similarly, **feel for** meaning 'try to find something by touching':

*He was feeling for the keyhole in the dark.*

But **feel** is not used in the continuous when it means 'sense':

*Don't you feel the house shaking?*  when it means 'think': *I feel you are wrong*

B **look**

The continuous is not used with **look** used as a link verb, e.g. *That cake looks good*, or with **look on** (= consider), **look up to** (= respect) and **look down on** (= despise) (see chapter 38). But **look (at), look for/in/into/out** and **look on** (== watch) are deliberate actions and can be used in the continuous tenses:

*He is looking for his glasses.*

*I'm looking out for a better job.*

C **smell**

The continuous is not used with **smell** meaning 'perceive a scent/an odour, e.g. *I smell gas*, or with smell used as a link verb, but can be used with smell meaning 'sniff at':

*Why are you smelling the milk? Does it smell sour?*

D **taste**

**taste** as a link verb is not used in the continuous:

*This coffee tastes bitter*. (has a bitter taste)

But taste meaning 'to test the flavour of can be used in the continuous:

*She was tasting the pudding to see if it was sweet enough.*

**see** and **hear** used in the continuous forms

A **see** can be used in the continuous when it means 'meet by appointment' (usually for business), 'interview':

*The director is seeing the applicants this morning.*

*I am seeing my solicitor tomorrow.*

Also when it means 'visit' (usually as a tourist):

*Tom is seeing the town/the sights.*

It can also be used in the continuous in the following combinations:

**see about** = make arrangements or enquiries:

*We are seeing about a work permit/or you.* (trying to arrange this)

**see to** = arrange, put right, deal with:

*The plumber is here. He is seeing to the leak in our tank.*

**see** somebody **out** = escort him/her to the door.

**see** somebody **home** = escort him/her home.

**see** somebody **to** + place = escort him/her to + place:

*ANN : Is Bill seeing you home after the party?*

*MARY: No, he's just seeing me to my bus.*

**see** someone **off** = say goodbye to a departing traveller at the starting point of his journey (usually the station, airport etc.):

*We're leaving tomorrow. Bill is seeing us off at the airport.*

B **hear** can be used in the continuous when it means 'listen formally to' (complaints/evidence etc.):

*The court is hearing evidence this afternoon.*

**hear** meaning 'receive news or letters' can also be used in the continuous form but only in the present perfect and future:

*I've been hearing ail about your accident.*

*You 'II be hearing about the new scheme at our next meeting.*

**think, assume** and **expect** used in the continuous forms

A **think** can be used in the continuous when no opinion is given or asked for:

*What are you thinking about? ~ I'm thinking about the play we saw last night.* But

*What do you think of it?* (opinion asked for) *~ I don't think much of it.* (opinion given)

*Tom is thinking of emigrating. What do you think of the idea? ~ I think it is a stupid idea. He should stay where he is.*

B **assume** can be used in the continuous when it means 'accept as a starting point':

*I'm assuming that you have time to do a lot of research.*

**assume** power/control of a country or organisation can also be used in the continuous:

*The new government is assuming power at once.*

C **expect** can be used in the continuous when it means 'await':

*I'm expecting a letter. She's expecting a baby in May.*