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**Form**

In the affirmative the simple present has the same form as the infinitive but adds an **s** for the third person singular.

**Affirmative Negative Interrogative Negative interrogative**

I work I do not work Do I work? Don’t I work?

you work you do not work Do you work? Don’t you work?

he/she/it he/she/it does. doesn’t work Does she/he/it work? Doesn’t he/she/it work?

we work we don’t work Do we work? Don’t we work?

you work you do not work Do you work? Don’t you work?

they work they do not work Do they work? Don’t they work?

**Spelling notes**

* Verbs ending in **ss, sh, ch, x** and **o** add **es**, instead of **s** alone, to form the third person singular:

*I kiss, he kisses I box, he boxes*

*I rush, he rushes I do, he does*

*I watch, he watches I go, he goes*

* When **y** follows a consonant we change the y into **i** and add **es**:

I carry, he carries I copy, he copies I try, he tries

but verbs ending in **y** following a vowel obey the usual rule:

*obey, he obeys I say, he says*

**The simple present used to express habitual action**

The main use of the simple present tense is to express habitual actions:

*He smokes. Dogs bark. Cats drink milk.*

This tense does not tell us whether or not the action is being performed at the moment of speaking, and if we want to make this clear we must add a verb in the present continuous tense:

*He's working. He always works at night.*

*My dog barks a lot, but he isn't barking at the moment.*

The simple present tense is often used with adverbs or adverb phrases such as: *always, never, occasionally, often, sometimes, usually, every week, on Mondays, twice a year* etc.:

*How often do you wash your hair?*

*I go to church on Sundays It rains in winter.*

or with time clauses expressing routine or habitual actions.

**whenever** and **when** (= whenever) are particularly useful:

*Whenever it rains the roof teaks.*

*When you open the door a light goes on.*

**Other uses of the simple present tense**

A It is used, chiefly with the verb say, when we are asking about or quoting from books, notices or very recently received letters:

*What does that notice say? ~ It says, 'No parking.'*

*What does the book say? ~ It says, 'Cook very slowly.'*

*I see you've got a letter from Ann. What does she say? ~ She says she is coming to London next week.*

*Shakespeare says, 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be.'*

Other verbs of communication are also possible:

*Shakespeare advises us not to borrow or lend.*

*A notice at the end of the road warns people not to go any further.*

B It can be used in newspaper headlines:

MASS MURDERER ESCAPES PEACE TALKS FAIL

C It can be used for dramatic narrative. This is particularly useful when describing the action of a play, opera etc., and is often used by radio commentators at sports events, public functions etc.:

*When the curtain rises, Juliet is writing at her desk. Suddenly the window opens and a masked man enters.*

D It can be used for a planned future action or series of actions, particularly when they refer to a journey. Travel agents use it a good deal.

*We leave London at 10.00 next Tuesday and arrive in Paris at 13.00. We spend two hours in Paris and leave again at 15.00. We arrive in Rome at 19.30, spend four hours in Rome etc.*

E It must be used instead of the present continuous with verbs which cannot be used in the continuous form, e.g. love, see, believe etc., so that we can say I love you but not I am loving you. (See 168.)

F It is used in conditional sentences, type 1 (see 221):

*If I see Ann I'll ask her.*

*Unless you take the brake off the car won't move.*

G It is used in time clauses

(a) when there is an idea of routine:

*As soon as he earns any money he spends it.*

*She takes the boy to school before she goes to work.*

(b) when the main verb is in a future form (see 342):

*It will stop raining soon.*

*Then we'll go out. = When it stops raining we 'II go out.*