

VERB TENSES

The **Present Continuous (progressive)** tense is often used in conjunction with the *present simple* tense for narratives or writing descriptions.

These tenses tell about the activities or actions that are happening in a narration or description, and the activity or action that takes place habitually.

These study notes focus on the **Present Continuous** tense, and compare the different actions and times conveyed by the *present simple* and *present continuous*.

STUDY TIPS

In IELTS Writing Task 1 when describing current trends and changes that are taking place at the moment, remember to use the present continuous tense.

Generally, the present simple tense would be used in IELTS Writing Task 2.

CONTINUOUS (OR PROGRESSIVE) TENSES

Continuous tenses make reference to the **time** an activity or action is in progress.

The focus can be on:

- **duration** - the activity or action occurs over a period of time
- **a restriction in the duration** – the activity or action is temporary or interrupted; expressing an attitude toward the activity or event
- **an incomplete activity or action** – the starting or ending point of the activity or action is unknown

In summary, there are **six** kinds of **continuous tenses**: Present continuous, Present perfect continuous, Past continuous, Past perfect continuous, Future continuous, Future perfect continuous.

TENSE	EXAMPLE
Present continuous	The information evening is starting at 6:00 pm.
	<i>Meaning:</i> a future time reference that the information evening will start in a few hours
Present perfect continuous	The information evenings have been running since 2002.
	<i>Meaning:</i> the information evenings started happening in the past and are still happening now
PAST CONTINUOUS	I was conducting the information evening, when the student walked in.
	<i>Meaning:</i> the information evening was already in progress, and was interrupted by the student who walked in late
Past perfect continuous	I had been conducting the information evenings for two years when the school changed the venue.
	<i>Meaning:</i> the information evenings have been happening over a period of time, and then the venue for it changed; both events occur in the past
FUTURE CONTINUOUS	I will be attending the information evening tomorrow
	<i>Meaning:</i> the information evening will be in progress at a particular time in the future, namely tomorrow
Future perfect continuous	By next September, they will have been conducting information evenings for three years.
	<i>Meaning:</i> information evenings have been happening over a period of time and will reach a specified date of completion in the future

The following notes focus on the **Present Continuous** tense, and compare the different actions and times conveyed by the *present simple* and *present continuous*.

PRESENT CONTINUOUS Form

be + present participle	
	V + -ing
I am	writing
he/she/it is	writing
you/we/they are	writing

Time Reference

past	NOW	future
action/activity started here	action/activity is in progress	action/activity will end in the future

Use

ACTIVITY/ACTION	EXAMPLE
1. in progress at the moment of speaking or writing	The student is talking to the counsellor.
2. in progress over a period of time though not precisely at the moment of speaking or writing; activity/action is temporary	The student is studying in Sydney at Insearch, UTS.
3. in the near future; adverbs of time are sometimes used to show future time	The students are sitting the IELTS test tomorrow morning.
4. when describing current trends and changes	The statistics show that interest rates are falling .

Present Continuous Versus Present Simple

ACTION/ACTIVITY	EXAMPLE
1. moment of speaking/ writing versus habitual	John is writing an essay for his English teacher. John writes reports for the general manager every quarter.
2. temporary versus permanent	John is living in Sydney with relatives. His parents live in China.
3. specific versus general	Currently, they are teaching a group of engineers from Vietnam. They teach all levels of English.
4. change taking place at the moment versus a general fact	Unemployment is increasing and is now registering at 10%. When inflation increases , people demand higher wages.

Verbs that do not express actions are generally not used in continuous tenses. These are called **stative verbs**. They express emotions, senses, possession, mental processes and others.

For example:

Meaning	Stative Verbs
mental processes	believe, mean, remember, forget, imagine, understand, know
senses	feel, hear, smell, taste, see
emotions	love, hate, fear, regret, dislike, wish, prefer
possession	belong to, own, possess