

## *I work vs. I'm working*

Learners of English often have difficulties with distinguishing between the Present Simple (*I work*) and Present Continuous Tense (*I'm working*). The choice depends on whether you want to talk about something that happens regularly (Present Simple) or something that is happening right now (Present Continuous). Other differences between the two tenses may include the following:

Present Simple	Present Continuous
<b>daily routine, habits</b> Fred works in an office	<b>current or temporary situations</b> Fred is working from home this week.
<b>timetable</b> The train leaves at 10.30 a.m.	<b>arrangement</b> I'm going to London by plane.
<b>instructions</b> After you open the tin, pour the contents into a pot.	<b>trends</b> More and more people are buying frozen ready meals.
<b>sequence of actions in the present</b> After he comes to work, he goes to the canteen and orders a sandwich.	<b>repeated irritating actions</b> He is always coming late to work.

The following groups of verbs are not normally used in the continuous form. These verbs are called state verbs.

- ownership: *own, have, need, belong...*
- sense: *see, hear, feel, seem...*
- emotions: *like, love, hate, prefer, want...*
- opinions: *think, believe, know, understand, remember...*

Notice that some of the state verbs have more than one meaning. When these verbs denote actions they can be used in the Present Continuous tense.

- I can't answer the phone. I'm having a meeting.
- My wife is thinking of finding a new job. (consider)
- Our boss is being rather difficult at the moment. (behave)

A. Choose the correct option.

1. Where *do you stay/are you staying* this weekend?
2. A consultant *works/is working* for us for a couple of weeks.
3. We *negotiate/are negotiating* salaries every autumn with the trade union.
4. The HR department *recruits/is recruiting* some extra people for this project.
5. The new manager *likes/is liking* good team players.
6. What sort of work *do you do/are you doing*?
7. Good clothes *become/are becoming* more and more expensive.
8. I *think/am thinking* you would be happier in another job.
9. In our company, assistants *don't have/aren't having* much responsibility.
10. Who *takes/is taking* care of the legal department while Susan's away?

Key: 1. are you staying, 2. is working, 3. negotiate, 4. is recruiting, 5. likes, 6. do you do, 7. are becoming, 8. think, 9. don't have, 10. is taking

B. Complete the sentences with the verbs in brackets in either the Present Simple or

Present Continuous Tense.

1. Mathew \_\_\_\_\_ (always, drive) to work but this week he \_\_\_\_\_ (take) the bus.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ (write) to inquire if your \_\_\_\_\_ (currently, accept) submission proposals.
3. James \_\_\_\_\_ (look after) Kate's clients while she \_\_\_\_\_ (be) on maternity leave.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ (currently, take) private classes because I \_\_\_\_\_ (think) French is going to be a very useful language in our sector.
5. Where \_\_\_\_\_ your company \_\_\_\_\_ (hold) its AGM this year?
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ (have to) speak to the CEO urgently but he \_\_\_\_\_ (answer, negation) his phone.
7. Our clients \_\_\_\_\_ (want, negation) to accept our conditions, which is strange because they \_\_\_\_\_ (usually, be) so reasonable.
8. "The finance department \_\_\_\_\_ (have) the meeting this Thursday at 3 p.m. Will you be able to attend?" – "No, I'm afraid not. I \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to a conference in Athens."
9. At present they \_\_\_\_\_ (build) many new highways in New York State.
10. Who \_\_\_\_\_ (supervise) all the shop assistants?

Key: 1. always drives, is taking, 2. am writing, are currently accepting, 3. is looking after, is, 4. am currently taking, think, 5. is your company holding, 6. have to, isn't answering, 7. don't want, are usually, 8. is having, am going. 9. are building, 10. supervises