

# The present continuous:further information

## Adverbs of frequency

Although we usually use the present simple with **adverbs of frequency**, it is possible to use **always** and words with a similar meaning with the present continuous. The present simple focuses on how regularly something happens and the present continuous emphasises that it happens a lot. It is a way of exaggerating 'very often'. Compare:

She **always** smiles when she greets a client. [every time that she greets a client]  
She's **always smiling**. [she smiles a lot; not all the time of course]

We can use it when we think something happens too often or we are unhappy about something:

I'm **always losing** my keys!  
You're **always talking** on the phone when you should be working!  
He's **constantly playing** with his pen during meetings!  
She's **forever talking** about her children - it's so boring!



My neighbour's **always popping** in for a coffee, which is nice.



My children **are** always **fighting**; what shall I do?

## Stative and active verbs

We usually avoid using the present continuous (and other continuous tenses) with stative verbs. These are different from active verbs because they describe a state, feelings or emotions. They are also used to refer to the senses or to talk about weights and measurements etc.

**I know a lot of Japanese people. [not 'I'm knowing']**

**He believes in God. [not 'He's believing']**

**I'm a teacher. [not 'I'm being']**

**It weighs 3kg. [not 'It's weighing']**

However, there are exceptions. See **stative and active verbs** for more detail.

## The senses

Verbs like taste, see, hear, smell, sound etc. are more commonly used with simple tenses:

**It tastes delicious.**

**It smells good.**

**It sounds lovely.**

**It feels soft.**

**It looks wonderful.**

However we can also use the continuous when talking about current situations:

**You look nice today. = You're looking nice today**

**Do you feel better today? = Are you feeling better today?**

**The garden is looking lovely now that spring is here.**

**It is feeling much softer now I have washed it with Lenor.**

## Stories and jokes

In informal, spoken English, we sometimes use the **present simple** and present continuous to tell a joke or relate something that happened in the past because it sounds more interesting or dramatic:



You won't believe what happened last night! Well, I'm **cooking** the dinner when his car screeches to a halt and I stop what I'm **doing**. He comes in and he's **holding** a bunch of flowers. Well, I know what he's **thinking**...



A dog walks into a bar and he's **wearing** a suit and tie. He's **carrying** a briefcase and he says to the barman...

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