

The present simple

Introduction



I **love** my dog!

Definition

The present simple is one of the two present tenses used in modern English. The other one is the **present continuous**.

Construction

Affirmative: Subject + verb/verb with **s** or **es**
I **like** cheese.

We add **s** or **es** to the end of regular **verbs** with **he**, **she** or **it**. It is important to pronounce the **s** or **es**.

Anne loves**s** chocolate.

Thierry misses**es** his old job.

The train arrives**s** at 10 o'clock.

Negative: Subject + do + not + **bare infinitive**
I **don't like** cheese.

Interrogative: Do + subject + bare infinitive
Do you like cheese?

Negative	Interrogative
I don't work	Do I work ?
You don't work	Do you work ?
He doesn't work	Does he work ?
She doesn't work	Does she work ?
It doesn't work	Does it work ?
We don't work	Do we work ?
They don't work	Do they work ?

Does sounds like **dʌz**.

Doesn't sounds like **dʌzənt**.

Examples

He **doesn't like** his job.

I **don't work** on Fridays.

He **doesn't drink** coffee in the evening.

He **doesn't play** tennis.

They **don't live** in London.

Does he **work** in this office?

Do Bill and Ted **drink** tea or coffee?

Do Mexicans **speak** Spanish?

Does she **have** an appointment?

Do you **wash** your hair every day?

Irregular verbs

There are some irregular verbs, including 'do', 'go' and 'have'.

Regular verbs	Do	Go	Have
I work	I do	I go	I have
You work	You do	You go	You have
He works	He does	He goes	He has
She works	She does	She goes	She has
It works	It does	It goes	It has
We work	We do	We go	We have
They work	They do	They go	They have

For more irregular verbs please see the table [common irregular verbs](#).

Uses

Uses	Examples
To state general facts	The sun rises in the east. Australians speak English.
To give information	I like coffee. She lives in London. He plays tennis. This plane flies to Paris.
To talk about repeated actions, habits or routines	I leave work at 5pm. I go to the gym on Fridays.

Time phrases

We **use** time expressions with the present simple:

We **have** a team meeting **twice a week**.
I **take** the children to school **every morning**.
I **go** to the dentist **once a year**.
She **does** the shopping **on Saturdays**.

Adverbs of frequency

We often **use adverbs of frequency** with the present simple:

I always **visit** my parents at the weekend.
He often **goes** to the cinema.
They sometimes **meet** for lunch.
I rarely **eat** meat.
She never **arrives** early.

Stative and active verbs

We usually use the present simple 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 tastes lovely. [not 'It's tasting']

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

However, there are exceptions. See [stative and active verbs](#) for more detail.

Unusual or temporary behaviour

We usually use the stative verb 'to be' in the present simple, but we can use it in the present continuous if we're talking about unusual or temporary behaviour:

She's usually very selfish and difficult to work with but, today, she's **being** really kind and considerate - I don't know why!

Note that we can only do this if we are talking about behaviour or pretence: He's **being** polite.

Compare

She is impatient. (in general) She is being impatient. (at the moment)

They are generous. They are being generous.

She **is** usually very flexible, but she's **being** very stubborn about this!

Paul **is being** unprofessional; he **is** usually prepared and on time.



My daughter's **being** very rude today;
play.
it isn't like her at all.

My son's **being** a cowboy in the school

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 as in the examples below:

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.

Pronunciation of present tense regular verbs

<p>/s/ sound after soft consonants</p> <p>(no extra syllable)</p>	<p>/z/ sound after hard consonants and vowel sounds</p> <p>(no extra syllable)</p>	<p>/lz/ sound after /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, z, /ks/ and /dʒ/</p> <p>(this adds an extra syllable)</p>	<p>Change y to i and add es when verb ends in a consonant and y</p> <p>(no extra syllable)</p>
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likes talks walks laughs works waits drinks	shops stops wants sits eats	orders plays ends listens loves needs lives arrives learns	misses watches finishes manages fixes washes	hurry hurry + es hurries fly flies study studies
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Examples

Xavier **goes** to work at 8am but he sometimes **misses** the bus. On Friday afternoons, he **does** the shopping and he **watches** TV in the evenings. He **washes** his car every Sunday and **fixes** any problems. He **has** a son. He **helps** his father.



"What **do** you **do**?" "I **work** in a bank."

"**Do** you **enjoy** your job?" "Yes, but I sometimes **work** very late."

"**Do** you **travel** to other countries on business?" "No, but I **visit** clients in this country."

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 **hear** his car screech to a halt and I **drop** everything and **wait**. He **comes** in the door with a bunch of flowers in his hand. He **says**...



A dog **walks** into a bar and **orders** a bottle of wine. The barman **says**...



Sports commentaries

Similarly, sports commentators often use the present tense to describe the action - it sounds more dramatic and exciting.

The goalkeeper **kicks** it down the pitch. Kuyt **gets** on the end of it. He **passes** to Gerrard who **takes** it past two defenders. He **looks** up, **shoots** and **scores**!



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