**Simple Present**

**FORM**

[VERB] + s/es in third person

Examples:

* You **speak** English.
* **Do** you **speak** English?
* You **do not speak** English.

[Complete List of Simple Present Forms](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/simplepresentforms.html)

**USE 1 Repeated Actions**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepresentusual.gif

Use the Simple Present to express the idea that an action is repeated or usual. The action can be a habit, a hobby, a daily event, a scheduled event or something that often happens. It can also be something a person often forgets or usually does not do.

Examples:

* I **play** tennis.
* She **does not play** tennis.
* **Does** he **play** tennis?
* The train **leaves** every morning at 8 AM.
* The train **does not leave** at 9 AM.
* When **does** the train usually **leave**?
* She always **forgets** her purse.
* He never **forgets** his wallet.
* Every twelve months, the Earth **circles** the Sun.
* **Does** the Sun **circle** the Earth?

**USE 2 Facts or Generalizations**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepresentfact.gif

The Simple Present can also indicate the speaker believes that a fact was true before, is true now, and will be true in the future. It is not important if the speaker is correct about the fact. It is also used to make generalizations about people or things.

Examples:

* Cats **like** milk.
* Birds **do not like** milk.
* **Do** pigs **like** milk?
* California **is** in America.
* California **is not** in the United Kingdom.
* Windows **are** made of glass.
* Windows **are not** made of wood.
* New York **is** a small city. *It is not important that this fact is untrue.*

**USE 3 Scheduled Events in the Near Future**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplefuture.gif

Speakers occasionally use Simple Present to talk about scheduled events in the near future. This is most commonly done when talking about public transportation, but it can be used with other scheduled events as well.

Examples:

* The train **leaves** tonight at 6 PM.
* The bus **does not arrive** at 11 AM, it **arrives** at 11 PM.
* When **do** we **board** the plane?
* The party **starts** at 8 o'clock.
* When **does** class **begin** tomorrow?

**USE 4 Now (Non-Continuous Verbs)**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/presentcontinuousnow.gif

Speakers sometimes use the Simple Present to express the idea that an action is happening or is not happening now. This can only be done with [Non-Continuous Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html)and certain [Mixed Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html).

Examples:

* I **am** here now.
* She **is not** here now.
* He **needs** help right now.
* He **does not need** help now.
* He **has** his passport in his hand.
* **Do** you **have** your passport with you?

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

* You **only** speak English.
* Do you **only** speak English?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

* Once a week, Tom **cleans** the car. *Active*
* Once a week, the car **is cleaned** by Tom. *Passive*

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**Present Continuous**

**FORM**

[am/is/are + present participle]

Examples:

* You **are watching** TV.
* **Are** you **watching** TV?
* You **are not watching** TV.

[Complete List of Present Continuous Forms](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/presentcontinuousforms.html)

**USE 1 Now**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/presentcontinuousnow.gif

Use the Present Continuous with [Normal Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html) to express the idea that something is happening now, at this very moment. It can also be used to show that something is not happening now.

Examples:

* You **are learning** English now.
* You **are not swimming** now.
* **Are** you **sleeping**?
* I **am sitting**.
* I **am not standing**.
* **Is** he **sitting** or **standing**?
* They **are reading** their books.
* They **are not watching** television.
* What **are** you **doing**?
* Why **aren't** you **doing** your homework?

**USE 2 Longer Actions in Progress Now**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/presentcontinuouslongnow.gif

In English, "now" can mean: this second, today, this month, this year, this century, and so on. Sometimes, we use the Present Continuous to say that we are in the process of doing a longer action which is in progress; however, we might not be doing it at this exact second.

Examples: (All of these sentences can be said while eating dinner in a restaurant.)

* I **am studying** to become a doctor.
* I **am not studying** to become a dentist.
* I **am reading** the book *Tom Sawyer.*
* I **am not reading** any books right now.
* **Are** you **working** on any special projects at work?
* **Aren't** you **teaching** at the university now?

**USE 3 Near Future**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplefuture.gif

Sometimes, speakers use the Present Continuous to indicate that something will or will not happen in the near future.

Examples:

* I **am meeting** some friends after work.
* I **am not going** to the party tonight.
* **Is** he **visiting** his parents next weekend?
* **Isn't** he **coming** with us tonight?

**USE 4 Repetition and Irritation with "Always"**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepresentusual.gif

The Present Continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happens. Notice that the meaning is like [Simple Present](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/simplepresent.html), but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb+ing."

Examples:

* She **is always coming** to class late.
* He **is constantly talking**. I wish he would shut up.
* I don't like them because they **are always complaining**.

**REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs/ Mixed Verbs**

It is important to remember that [Non-Continuous Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html) cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for [Mixed Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html) cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using Present Continuous with these verbs, you must use [Simple Present](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/simplepresent.html).

Examples:

* She **is loving** this chocolate ice cream. ***Not Correct***
* She **loves** this chocolate ice cream. ***Correct***

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

* You are **still** watching TV.
* Are you **still** watching TV?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

* Right now, Tom **is writing** the letter. *Active*
* Right now, the letter **is being written** by Tom. *Passive*

[More About Active / Passive Forms](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/activepassive.html)

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**Simple Past**

**FORM**

[VERB+ed] or [irregular verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregularverbs.html)

Examples:

* You **called** Debbie.
* **Did** you **call** Debbie?
* You **did not call** Debbie.

[Complete List of Simple Past Forms](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/simplepastforms.htm)

**USE 1 Completed Action in the Past**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepast.gif

Use the Simple Past to express the idea that an action started and finished at a specific time in the past. Sometimes, the speaker may not actually mention the specific time, but they do have one specific time in mind.

Examples:

* I **saw** a movie yesterday.
* I **didn't see** a play yesterday.
* Last year, I **traveled** to Japan.
* Last year, I **didn't travel** to Korea.
* **Did** you **have** dinner last night?
* She **washed** her car.
* He **didn't wash** his car.

**USE 2 A Series of Completed Actions**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepastseries.gif

We use the Simple Past to list a series of completed actions in the past. These actions happen 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on.

Examples:

* I **finished** work, **walked** to the beach, and **found** a nice place to swim.
* He **arrived** from the airport at 8:00, **checked** into the hotel at 9:00, and **met** the others at 10:00.
* **Did** you **add** flour, **pour** in the milk, and then **add** the eggs?

**USE 3 Duration in Past**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepastduration.gif

The Simple Past can be used with a duration which starts and stops in the past. A duration is a longer action often indicated by expressions such as: for two years, for five minutes, all day, all year, etc.

Examples:

* I **lived** in Brazil for two years.
* Shauna **studied** Japanese for five years.
* They **sat** at the beach all day.
* They **did not stay** at the party the entire time.
* We **talked** on the phone for thirty minutes.
* A: How long **did** you **wait** for them?  
  B: We **waited** for one hour.

**USE 4 Habits in the Past**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepasthabit.gif

The Simple Past can also be used to describe a habit which stopped in the past. It can have the same meaning as "[used to](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/usedto.html)." To make it clear that we are talking about a habit, we often add expressions such as: always, often, usually, never, when I was a child, when I was younger, etc.

Examples:

* I **studied** French when I was a child.
* He **played** the violin.
* He **didn't play** the piano.
* **Did** you **play** a musical instrument when you were a kid?
* She **worked** at the movie theater after school.
* They never **went** to school, they always **skipped** class.

**USE 5 Past Facts or Generalizations**

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepastfact.gif

The Simple Past can also be used to describe past facts or generalizations which are no longer true. As in USE 4 above, this use of the Simple Past is quite similar to the expression "[used to](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/usedto.html)."

Examples:

* She **was** shy as a child, but now she is very outgoing.
* He **didn't like** tomatoes before.
* **Did** you **live** in Texas when you **were** a kid?
* People **paid** much more to make cell phone calls in the past.

**IMPORTANT When-Clauses Happen First**

Clauses are groups of words which have meaning but are often not complete sentences. Some clauses begin with the word "when" such as "when I dropped my pen..." or "when class began..." These clauses are called when-clauses, and they are very important. The examples below contain when-clauses.

Examples:

* **When I paid her one dollar**, she answered my question.
* She answered my question **when I paid her one dollar**.

When-clauses are important because they always happen first when both clauses are in the Simple Past. Both of the examples above mean the same thing: first, I paid her one dollar, and then, she answered my question. It is not important whether "when I paid her one dollar" is at the beginning of the sentence or at the end of the sentence. However, the example below has a different meaning. First, she answered my question, and then, I paid her one dollar.

Example:

* I paid her one dollar **when she answered my question**.

**ADVERB PLACEMENT**

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

* You **just** called Debbie.
* Did you **just** call Debbie?

**ACTIVE / PASSIVE**

Examples:

* Tom **repaired** the car. *Active*
* The car **was repaired** by Tom. *Passive*

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# Past Continuous

### FORM

[was/were + present participle]

Examples:

* You **were studying** when she called.
* **Were** you **studying** when she called?
* You **were not studying** when she called.

[Complete List of Past Continuous Forms](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/pastcontinuousforms.html)

### USE 1 Interrupted Action in the Past

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/pastcontinuous.gif

Use the Past Continuous to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually a shorter action in the Simple Past. Remember this can be a real interruption or just an interruption in time.

Examples:

* I **was watching** TV when she called.
* When the phone rang, she **was writing** a letter.
* While we **were having** the picnic, it started to rain.
* What **were** you **doing** when the earthquake started?
* I **was listening** to my iPod, so I didn't hear the fire alarm.
* You **were not listening** to me when I told you to turn the oven off.
* While John **was sleeping** last night, someone stole his car.
* Sammy **was waiting** for us when we got off the plane.
* While I **was writing** the email, the computer suddenly went off.
* A: What **were** you **doing** when you broke your leg?  
  B: I **was snowboarding**.

### USE 2 Specific Time as an Interruption

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/pastcontinuous.gif

In USE 1, described above, the Past Continuous is interrupted by a shorter action in the Simple Past. However, you can also use a specific time as an interruption.

Examples:

* Last night at 6 PM, I **was eating** dinner.
* At midnight, we **were** still **driving** through the desert.
* Yesterday at this time, I **was sitting** at my desk at work.

#### IMPORTANT

In the Simple Past, a specific time is used to show when an action began or finished. In the Past Continuous, a specific time only interrupts the action.

Examples:

* Last night at 6 PM, I **ate** dinner.  
  I started eating at 6 PM.
* Last night at 6 PM, I **was eating** dinner.  
  I started earlier;and at 6 PM, I was in the process of eating dinner.

### USE 3 Parallel Actions

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/pastcontinuousparallel.gif

When you use the Past Continuous with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions were happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.

Examples:

* I **was studying** while he **was making** dinner.
* While Ellen **was reading**, Tim **was watching** television.
* **Were** you **listening** while he **was talking**?
* I **wasn't paying** attention while I **was writing** the letter, so I made several mistakes.
* What **were** you **doing** while you **were waiting**?
* Thomas **wasn't working**, and I **wasn't working** either.
* They **were eating** dinner, **discussing** their plans, and **having** a good time.

### USE 4 Atmosphere

In English, we often use a series of parallel actions to describe the atmosphere at a particular time in the past.

Example:

* When I walked into the office, several people **were** busily **typing**, some **were talking** on the phones, the boss **was yelling** directions, and customers **were waiting** to be helped. One customer **was yelling** at a secretary and **waving** his hands. Others **were complaining** to each other about the bad service.

### USE 5 Repetition and Irritation with "Always"

http://www.englishpage.com/images/verbs/simplepasthabit.gif

The Past Continuous with words such as "always" or "constantly" expresses the idea that something irritating or shocking often happened in the past. The concept is very similar to the expression "[used to](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/usedto.html)" but with negative emotion. Remember to put the words "always" or "constantly" between "be" and "verb+ing."

Examples:

* She **was always coming** to class late.
* He **was constantly talking**. He annoyed everyone.
* I didn't like them because they **were always complaining**.

### While vs. When

Clauses are groups of words which have meaning, but are often not complete sentences. Some clauses begin with the word "when" such as "when she called" or "when it bit me." Other clauses begin with "while" such as "while she was sleeping" and "while he was surfing." When you talk about things in the past, "when" is most often followed by the verb tense [Simple Past](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/simplepast.html), whereas "while" is usually followed by Past Continuous. "While" expresses the idea of "during that time." Study the examples below. They have similar meanings, but they emphasize different parts of the sentence.

Examples:

* I was studying **when she called**.
* **While I was studying**, she called.

### REMEMBER Non-Continuous Verbs / Mixed Verbs

It is important to remember that [Non-Continuous Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html) cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Also, certain non-continuous meanings for [Mixed Verbs](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/types.html) cannot be used in continuous tenses. Instead of using Past Continuous with these verbs, you must use [Simple Past](http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/simplepast.html).

Examples:

* Jane **was being** at my house when you arrived. **Not Correct**
* Jane **was** at my house when you arrived. **Correct**

### ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

Examples:

* You were **just** studying when she called.
* Were you **just** studying when she called?

### ACTIVE / PASSIVE

Examples:

* The salesman **was helping** the customer when the thief came into the store. Active
* The customer **was being helped** by the salesman when the thief came into the store. Passive