

Vocabulary Building

Present Progressive – A verb tense formed by using a “to-be” verb with an “ing” verb. Can indicate: 1) an action that is happening “right now.” 2) a temporary action that is happening in the present. 3) a future action.

Continuous – Continuing without stopping; an action that takes up a period of time.

Temporary – Continuing or intended for a limited amount of time; a present circumstance that will not be this way forever, not permanent.

Indicate – To show or direct attention to.

Simple Present – A verb tense that usually shows something that is done on a regular basis or something that is permanent.

Permanent – Something that doesn’t change but rather stays the same.

Are there more unfamiliar words?

Look up words you don’t know on the Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary at www.learnersdictionary.com.

Want More Practice?

There are staff in the Learning Center who would love to help you with your writing!

The College Skills Zone

The College Skills Zone is a great place to engage in conversations that help you understand concepts, especially some basic grammar concepts, and then practice those skills. The College Skills Zone is a place where you can just drop in anytime during open hours.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center assistants are trained to help you with any aspect of the writing process, from understanding an assignment, to brainstorming, to revising your essays. You can drop in during open hours or make a 30-minute appointment for a specific time.

English Language Learner Specialist

A specialist for English Language Learners, Sarah Mosser, is available in the Learning Center during certain hours for drop-in or appointments. Because her schedule varies, it is best to make appointments.

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Grammar

Present Progressive



Go-To Guides

Go-To Guides are designed to help in all areas of the writing process.

A Brief Explanation

The *present progressive* verb tense, also called *present continuous*, is a very common tense in English.

Present progressive tense can serve a few functions.

1. **Most often, it is used to indicate an action that is happening right now.**

Example: I **am studying** for my final exam.

He **is going** to the store.

We **are waiting** for a table.

You **are being** really rude.

2. **It can also be used for a temporary, continuous action that is happening in the present.**

Example: “I am living with my parents.”

This would imply that the speaker doesn’t always live with their parents, but that for at least a temporary time, they are living at their parent’s house.

“I live with my parents.”

In this instance, the speaker is implying that the situation is not temporary — they always live with their parents; it is permanent.

3. **Present progressive can also be used in more informal speech or writing to indicate a future action**, but because the tense itself cannot indicate future, a time frame has to be included to let the listener know that the speaker is talking about a future action.

Example: We are going to the beach tomorrow.

I’m walking to the library this afternoon.

Later this week, we’re buying a new house.

So how do you form the present progressive tense?

1. Use a “to-be” verb that matches your subject.

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| I am | We are |
| You are | You all are |
| He/She/It is | They are |

2. Use the “ing” form of the action verb (studying, going, waiting, being, walking etc).

Examples: We **are watching** the Seahawks game on Sunday. However, my dad **is cheering** for the Packers.

Examples

How is present progressive different from using simple present? Let’s look at some rules and examples.

Simple present implies that something is done on a regular basis, as opposed to something that is being done right now.

1. Actions

Simple present: I walk to school.

Using simple present indicates that the speaker walks to school on a normal basis and isn’t necessarily walking to school right this second, just that walking to school is their normal routine.

Present progressive: I am walking to school.

The use of present progressive indicates that the speaker is walking to school right at this moment. They may or may not always walk to school—the tense only shows that they are walking right now.

2. Permanent versus temporary circumstances

Simple present: She borrows my brother’s car for work.

Using simple present indicates that this is a permanent arrangement. She always borrows my brother’s car to get to work.

Present progressive: She is borrowing my brother’s car for work.

Using present progressive lets us know that this is only a temporary thing. Maybe she’s only borrowing the car for today, or maybe for this week or the whole month, but either way, it’s temporary. She doesn’t always borrow my brother’s car for work.

3. Behavior or Personality

Simple Present: She is rude.

Using simple present implies that she is always rude. In general, she is normally rude to people.

Present Progressive: She is being rude.

Here, the use of present progressive indicates that she is being rude at this moment, but she is not necessarily always a rude person.

Try it Out!

True or False?

1. T F Present progressive is also known as present continuous.
2. T F Present progressive can be used in the same way as simple present and means the same thing.
3. T F To form the present progressive tense, there needs to be a “to-be” verb that matches the subject.
4. T F The “ing” form of the action verb is not necessary for present progressive as long as the “to-be” verb is clear.

ANSWERS: 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. F

Forming the Present Progressive

Change the sentences from simple present to present progressive.

1. I work for the local newspaper.

2. He fixes my car for me.

3. We are nice to the old lady next door.

4. They watch television.

Explain

In the above section, “Forming the Present Progressive,” how are the sentences you wrote different from the sentences in simple present tense? How does using present progressive change the meaning of the sentence?
