

## 1. The present continuous

**The present continuous** is used to talk about present situations which we see as short-term or temporary. We use the present simple to talk about present situations which we see as long-term or permanent.

In these examples, the action is taking place at the time of speaking: -

It's raining.

Who is Kate talking to on the phone?

Look, somebody is trying to steal that man's wallet.

I'm not looking. My eyes are closed tightly.

In these examples, the action is true at the present time but we don't think it will be true in the long term: -

I'm looking for a new apartment.

He's thinking about leaving his job.

They're considering making an appeal against the judgment.

Are you getting enough sleep?

In these examples, the action is at a definite point in the future and it has already been arranged: -

I'm meeting her at 6.30.

They aren't arriving until Tuesday.

We are having a special dinner at a top restaurant for all the senior managers.

Isn't he coming to the dinner?

## 2. Present Simple

We use the present simple to talk about actions we see as long term or permanent. It is a very common and very important tense.

Here, we are talking about regular actions or events:-

They drive to the office every day.  
She doesn't come here very often.  
The news usually starts at 6.00 every evening.  
Do you usually have bacon and eggs for breakfast?

Here, we are talking about facts:-

We have two children.  
Water freezes at 0° C or 32° F.  
What does this expression mean?  
The Thames flows through London.

Here, we are talking about future facts, usually found in a timetable or a chart:-

Christmas Day falls on a Monday this year.  
The plane leaves at 5.00 tomorrow morning.  
Ramadan doesn't start for another 3 weeks.  
Does the class begin at 10 or 11 this week?

Here, we are talking about our thoughts and feelings at the time of speaking. Although these feelings can be short-term, we use the present simple and not the present continuous.

They don't ever agree with us.  
I think you are right.  
He doesn't want you to do it.  
Do you understand what I am trying to say.

### **3. Present simple or continuous**

We use the Present Simple

For regular actions or events: -

I watch TV most evenings.

Facts:-

The sun rises in the east.

Facts about the future:

The plane leaves at 5.00 in the morning.

thoughts and feelings about the time of speaking

I don't understand.

We use the Present Continuous at the time of speaking ('now'):

I'm watching a movie on TV.

Things which are true at the moment but not always:

I'm looking for a new job.

Present plans for the future:

I'm taking my husband to New York for his birthday.

Now look at these sentences:

I usually don't drink coffee but I'm having one this morning because there is nothing else.

I often drive to work but I'm taking the train this morning because my car is in the workshop for repair.

I'm thinking about dying my hair blonde but I don't think my wife will be very happy about it.

My parents live in New York but I'm just visiting.

Notice how in all these examples we use the present continuous to talk about events which are temporary/limited in time and the present simple to talk about events which are habits/permanent.

#### **4. Past simple**

We use the past simple to talk about actions and states which we see as completed in the past.

We can use it to talk about a specific point in time.

She came back last Friday.

I saw her in the street.

They didn't agree to the deal.

It can also be used to talk about a period of time:

She lived in Tokyo for seven years.

They were in London from Monday to Thursday of last week.

When I was living in New York, I went to all the art exhibitions I could.

You will often find the past simple used with time expressions such as these:

Yesterday

three weeks ago

last year

in 2002

from March to June

for a long time

for 6 weeks

in the 1980s

in the last century

in the past

## **5. Past continuous**

We use the past continuous to talk about past events which went on for a period of time.

We use it when we want to emphasize the continuing process of an activity or the period of that activity. (If we just want to talk about the past event as a simple fact, we use the past simple.)

While I was driving home, Peter was trying desperately to contact me.

Were you expecting any visitors?

Sorry, were you sleeping?

I was just making some coffee.

I was thinking about him last night.

In the 1990s few people were using mobile phones.

We often use it to describe a "background action" when something else happened.

I was walking in the street when I suddenly fell over.

She was talking to me on the phone and it suddenly went dead.

They were still waiting for the plane when I spoke to them.

The company was declining rapidly before he took charge.

We were just talking about it before you arrived.

I was making a presentation in front of 500 people when the microphone stopped working.

## **6. Past Simple or Continuous**

Both the past simple and the past continuous refer to completed actions in the past.

When we use these two forms in the same sentence, we use the past continuous to talk about the "background action" and the past simple to talk about the shorter completed action.

It was raining hard when we left the building.

I was reading the report when you rang.

He was going out to lunch when I saw him.

## 7. Present Perfect

Present perfect when we want to look back from the present to the past.

We can use it to look back on the recent past.

I've broken my watch so I don't know what time it is.

They have cancelled the meeting.

She's taken my copy. I don't have one.

The sales team has doubled its turnover.

When we look back on the recent past, we often use the words 'just' 'already' or the word 'yet' (in negatives and questions only).

We've already talked about that.

She hasn't arrived yet.

I've just done it.

They've already met.

They don't know yet.

Have you spoken to him yet?

Have they got back to you yet?

It can also be used to look back on the more distant past.

We've been to Singapore a lot over the last few years.

She's done this type of project many times before.

We've mentioned it to them on several occasions over the last six months.

They've often talked about it in the past.

When we look back on the more distant past, we often use the words 'ever' (in questions) and 'never'.

Have you ever been to Argentina?

Has he ever talked to you about the problem?

I've never met Jim and Sally.

We've never considered investing in Mexico.

## 8. Present perfect continuous

This tense is used to talk about an action or actions that started in the past and continued until recently or that continue into the future:

We can use it to refer to an action that has finished but you can still see evidence.

Oh, the kitchen is a mess. Who has been cooking?  
You look tired. Have you been sleeping properly?  
I've got a stiff neck. I've been working too long on computer.

It can refer to an action that has not finished.

I've been learning Spanish for 20 years and I still don't know very much.  
I've been waiting for him for 30 minutes and he still hasn't arrived.  
He's been telling me about it for days. I wish he would stop.

It can refer to a series of actions.

She's been writing to her regularly for a couple of years.  
He's been phoning me all week for an answer.  
The university has been sending students here for over twenty years to do work experience.

The present perfect continuous is often used with 'since', 'for', 'all week', 'for days', 'lately', 'recently', 'over the last few months'.

You haven't been getting good results over the last few months.  
They haven't been working all week. They're on strike  
He hasn't been talking to me for weeks.  
We've been working hard on it for ages.  
I've been looking at other options recently.  
He's been working here since 2001.

## 9. Present perfect simple or continuous

Often there is very little difference between the present perfect simple and the present perfect continuous. In many cases, both are equally acceptable.

They've been working here for a long time but Andy has worked here for even longer.  
I've lived here for 10 years and she has been living here for 12 years.

To emphasize the action, we use the continuous form.

We've been working really hard for a couple of months.  
She's been having a hard time.

To emphasize the result of the action, we use the simple form.

I've made fifteen phone calls this morning.  
He's written a very good report.

Look at the difference in these examples.

I've been reading this book for two months but I've only read half of it. It's very difficult to read.  
She's been trying to convince him for 20 minutes but she hasn't managed to yet.  
They've been talking about this for month and they still haven't found a solution.

When an action is finished and you can see the results, use the continuous form.

The phone bill is enormous. You've been calling your boyfriend in Australia, haven't you?  
You're red in the face. Have you been running?

When you use the words 'ever' or 'never', use the simple form.

I don't know them. I've never met them.  
Have you ever heard anything so strange in your life?

## 10. Past Simple or Present Perfect

(Remember that British and American English have different rules for the use of the present perfect. The comments and the exercises here refer to correct grammar for British English. In American English, it is often considered acceptable to use the past simple in some of these examples.)

The past simple is used to talk about actions in the past that have finished. It talks about **'then'** and definitely excludes **'now'**.

The present perfect simple to look back on actions in the past from the present. It always includes **'now'**.

These sentences are in the past with no connection to the present.

Past with no connection to the present	Same situations seen from the present
I first got to know him 10 years ago.	I've known him for 10 years.
I started work here in 1989.	I've worked here since 1989.
I had too much to eat at lunchtime.	My stomach hurts. I've eaten too much.

We use time expressions like **'yesterday'**, **'ago'**, **'last year'**, **'in 1999'** with the **past simple**.

Now look at these.

We spoke to him yesterday.

He came in a few moments ago.

We made our last purchase from them over a year ago.

She joined the company in 1999.

We use time expressions like **'ever'**, **'never'**, **'since'** with the present perfect.

I've never seen so many people here before.

Have you ever been more surprised?

I've done a lot since we last talked about it.

Typical time expressions used with the present perfect in British English but often used with the past simple in American English are **'already'**, **'just'**, **'yet'**.

United Kingdom	United States
I haven't done it yet.	I didn't do it yet.
I've just done it.	I just did it.
I've already done it.	I already did it.

We can use the time phrase **'for'** with both forms, but with different meanings.

I lived in Paris for a couple of years before I moved here.

I've lived in Paris for a couple of years and still love it.

## **11. Past perfect**

We use the past perfect simple to talk about what happened before a point in the past. It looks back from a point in the past to further in the past.

I hadn't known the bad news when I spoke to him.

I checked with the supplier and they still hadn't received the contract.

She had already told him before I got a chance to give him my version.

The company had started the year well but was badly hit by the postal strike.

The past perfect simple is often used when we report what people had said/thought/believed.

He told me they had already paid the bill.

He said he believed that John had moved to Italy.

I thought we had already decided on a name for this product.

## **12. past perfect continuous**

We use the past perfect continuous to look back at a situation in progress.

It was a good time to invest. Inflation had been falling for several months.

Before I changed jobs, I had been working on a plan to reduce production costs.

We had been thinking about buying a new house but then we decided to stay here.

We use it to say what had been happening before something else happened.

It had been snowing for a while before we left.

We had been playing tennis for only a few minutes when it started raining.

He was out of breath when he arrived because he had been running.

We use it when reporting things said in the past.

She said she had been trying to call me all day.

They said they had been shopping.

I told you I had been looking for some new clothes.

### 13. The Future “going to”

There is no one 'future tense' in English. There are 4 future forms. The one which is used most often in spoken English is '**going to**', not '**will**'.

We use '**going to**' when we want to talk about a plan for the future.

I'm going to see him later today.  
They're going to launch it next month.  
We're going to have lunch first.  
She's going to see what she can do.

Notice that this plan does not have to be for the near future.

When I retire I'm going to go back to Barbados to live.  
In ten years time, I'm going to be boss of my own successful company.

We use 'going to' when we want to make a prediction based on evidence we can see now.

Look out! That cup is going to fall off.  
Look at those black clouds. It's going to rain soon.  
These figures are really bad. We're going to make a loss.  
You look very tired. You're going to need to stop soon.

### 14. The future will

We can use 'will' to talk about future events we believe to be certain.

The sun will rise over there tomorrow morning.  
Next year, I'll be 50.  
That plane will be late. It always is.  
There won't be any snow. I'm certain. It's too warm.

Often we add '**perhaps**', '**maybe**', '**probably**', '**possibly**' to make the belief less certain.

I'll probably come back later.  
He'll possibly find out when he sees Jenny.  
Perhaps we'll meet again some day.

We often use 'will' with 'I think' or 'I hope'.

I think I'll go to bed now.  
I think she'll do well in the job.  
I hope you'll enjoy your stay.  
I hope you won't make too much noise.

We use 'will' at the moment we make a new decision or plan. The thought has just come into our head.

Bye. I'll phone you when I get there.  
I'll answer that.  
I'll go.  
I won't tell him. I promise.

## FORMS

### 1. The form –ing

The –ing form can be used like a **noun**, like an **adjective** (صفة) or like a **verb**.

Smoking is forbidden. (**noun**)

I have a long working day. (**adjective**)

I don't like dancing.

When it is used like a **noun** it may or may not have an **article** ( اداة تعريف ) before it.

Marketing is a very inexact science.

The marketing of the product will continue for a few months yet.

It can also be part of a '**noun phrase**'.

**Speaking to an audience** is always stressful.

**Swimming after work** is very relaxing.

In formal English, we would use a possessive with the –ing form. In informal English, many people do not.

I'm angry about his missing the meeting.

Do you mind my coming?

As an **adjective**, the –ing form can be used before a noun.

I was met by a welcoming party at the airport.

Let's go to the meeting room.

The –ing form is used after prepositions ( حرف جر ).

**Before** leaving, you need to speak to Sarah.

**After** discussing it with her, I've changed my mind.

Instead **of** feeling sorry for yourself, do some work for charity.

Notice that when '**to**' is used as a **preposition**, it is followed by the –ing form.

I'm **looking forward to seeing** him again.

I'm **used to working** long hours.

There are many verb + -ing combinations. Here are some common ones:

I admit telling her.

I appreciate having the raise.

I avoid speaking to him.

I consider blowing your nose in public to be wrong.

He denied telling her.

I enjoy dancing.

I feel like having a party.

I've finished writing the report.

I've given up going to the gym.

I can't help thinking about it.  
I can't imagine ever leaving this company.  
I don't mind doing that.  
He put off talking to her as long as he could.  
I can't stand drinking beer.

Some verbs can be followed by either the **infinitive** (صيغة المصدر) or –ing form but with different meanings. Here are some common ones:

I stopped smoking last month. (I no longer smoke.)  
I stopped to smoke a cigarette. (I stopped what I was doing and had a cigarette.)  
I remember telling him. (A memory of the past.)  
I must remember to tell him. (Something to remember for the future.)  
I'm interested in finding out more details. (Interested about the future.)  
I was interested to read his report. (Interested in the past.)

Some verbs can be followed by either the infinitive or –ing form but with the same meaning. Here are some common ones:

I love to go shopping.  
I love going shopping.  
I'm afraid to fly.  
I'm afraid of flying.  
I started to learn English 5 years ago.  
I started learning English 5 years ago.

## 2. Zero Conditional

When we talk about things that are generally or always true, we can use:

**If/When/Unless + present form + present simple or imperative (امري)**

If he gets there before me, ask him to wait.

When you fly budget airline, you have to pay for your drinks and snacks.

Unless you need more space, a small car is big enough for one person.

Note that we are not talking about a specific event but something which is generally true.

In the condition clause, we can use a variety of present forms. In the result clause, there can only be the present simple or imperative.

If you visit London, go on the London Eye.

If unemployment is rising, people tend to stay in their present jobs.

If you've done that, go and have a coffee.

When you go on holiday, take plenty of sun cream. It'll be very hot.

When I'm concentrating, please don't make so much noise.

When I've finished an article, I always ask Kate to read it through.

Notice that '**unless**' means the same as '**if not**'.

Unless he asks you politely, refuse to do any more work on the project.

Unless prices are rising, it's not a good investment.

Unless you've been there yourself, you don't really understand how fantastic it is.

### 3. First Conditional

We use the First Conditional to talk about future events that are likely to happen.

If we take John, he'll be really pleased.

If you give me some money, I'll pay you back tomorrow.

If they tell us they want it, we'll have to give it to them.

If Mary comes, she'll want to drive.

**The 'if' clause can be used with different present forms.**

If I go to New York again, I'll buy you a souvenir from the Empire State Building.

If he's feeling better, he'll come.

If she hasn't heard the bad news yet, I'll tell her.

**The "future clause" can contain 'going to' or the future perfect as well as 'will'.**

If I see him, I'm going to tell him exactly how angry I am.

If we don't get the contract, we'll have wasted a lot of time and money.

The "future clause" can also contain other modal verbs (افعال شكلية) such as '**can**' and '**must**'.

If you go to New York, you must have the cheesecake in Lindy's.

If he comes, you can get a lift home with him.

#### 4. Second Conditional

The Second Conditional is used to talk about “**impossible situations**”.

If we **were** in London today, we **would** be able to go to the concert in Hyde Park.

If I **had** millions of dollars, **I'd** give a lot to charity.

If there **were** no hungry people in this world, it **would** be a much better place.

If everyone **had** clean water to drink, there **would** be a lot less disease.

**Note that after I /he/she /it we often use the subjunctive form 'were' and not 'was'.** (Some people think that 'were' is the only 'correct' form but other people think 'was' is equally 'correct' .)

If **she were** happy in her job, **she wouldn't** be looking for another one.

If I lived in Japan, I'd have sushi every day.

If they were to enter our market, we'd have big problems.

Note the form '**If I were you**' which is often used to **give advice**.

If I were you, I'd look for a new place to live.

If I were you, I'd go back to school and get more qualifications.

The Second Conditional is also used to talk about '**unlikely**' situations.

If I went to China, I'd visit the Great Wall.

If I was the President, I'd reduce taxes.

If you were in my position, you'd understand.

Note that the choice between the first and the second conditional is often a question of the speaker's attitude rather than of facts. Compare these examples. Otto thinks these things are possible, Peter doesn't.

Otto – If I win the lottery, I'll buy a big house. (Possible)

Peter – If I won the lottery, I'd buy a big house. (Unlikely)

Otto – If I get promoted, I'll throw a big party.

Peter – If I got promoted, I'd throw a big party.

Otto – If my team wins the Cup, I'll buy champagne for everybody.

Peter – If my team won the Cup, I'd buy champagne for everybody.

Note that the 'If clause' can contain the past simple or the past continuous.

If I was still working in Brighton, I would commute by train.

If she were coming, she would be here by now.

If they were thinking of selling, I would want to buy.

Note that the main clause can contain **'would'** **'could'** or **'might'**.

If I had the chance to do it again, I would do it differently.

If we met up for lunch, we could go to that new restaurant.

If I spoke to him directly, I might be able to persuade him.

Also note that sometimes the 'if clause' is implied rather than spoken.

What would I do without you? ("if you weren't here")

Where would I get a taxi at this late time? ("if I wanted one")

He wouldn't agree. ("if I asked him")

## 5. Third Conditional

We can use the Third Conditional to talk about 'impossible' conditions, impossible because they are in the past and we cannot change what has happened.

If I had worked harder at school, I would have got better grades.

If I had had time, I would have gone to see him. But I didn't have time.

If we had bought that house, we would have had to rebuild the kitchen.

If we had caught the earlier train, we would have got there on time but we were late.

Notice that the main clause can contain '**would**', '**could**' or '**might**'.

If I had seen him at the meeting, I would have asked him. (But he wasn't there so I didn't.)

If I had seen him at the meeting, I could have asked him. ( But he wasn't there so it wasn't possible.)

If I had seen him at the meeting, I might have asked him. (But I'm not sure. Perhaps if the opportunity had arisen.)

If I had paid more attention in class, I would have understood the lesson.

Also notice that sometimes the 'if clause' is implied rather than spoken.

I'd have done it. ("if you had asked me but you didn't.")

I wouldn't have said that. ("if I'd been there.")

He wouldn't have let him get away with that. ("if he had tried that with me.")

## Comparisons

**Zero conditional** → If you visit London, go on the London Eye.

**(TRUE)** (If) + Present form, + Present simple or imperative (فعل امر)

**1<sup>st</sup> conditional** → If we take John, he'll be really pleased.

**(Likely)** (If) + Present simple or continuous, + Future form

**2<sup>nd</sup> conditional** → If we **were** in London, we **would** be able to go to the concert in Hyde Park.

**(Unreal)** (If) + Past simple, + **would be** + Infinitive (مصدر)

**3<sup>rd</sup> conditional** → If I had worked harder at school, I would have got better grades.

**(Impossible)** (If) + **had** + past participle, + **would have** + past participle