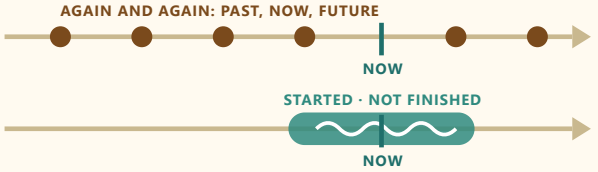
Present Simple or Present Continuous?

The simple is the standing rule: what is always, usually or generally true. The continuous is the instant: what is happening around now.

A1–C1 · Philo & Sophia, Lesson 1

She milks the cows. · She's milking them now.

PRESENT SIMPLE	Sophia (SUBJECT)	milks (VERB (+ S))	the cows (OBJECT)	every morning. (ROUTINE)
PRESENT CONTINUOUS	Sophia (SUBJECT)	is milking (AM / IS / ARE + -ING)	the cows (OBJECT)	right now. (IN PROGRESS)



Which one?

the standing rule or the instant

THE QUESTION	PRESENT SIMPLE	PRESENT CONTINUOUS
Always, or right now?	I **get up** at five. *every day*	I'**m getting up**, just a minute! *at this moment*
Permanent or temporary?	She **lives** in Seville. *her home*	She'**s staying** with her aunt this month. *for a while*
A fact, or what we see?	Water **boils** at 100 °C. *always true*	The water'**s boiling**. Turn it off! *happening now*
Routine, or change?	Lambs **are born** in spring. *every year*	The lambs **are getting** bigger. *changing around now*
Timetable, or plan?	The bus **leaves** at eight. *a fixed timetable*	We'**re leaving** at eight tomorrow. *our arrangement*
Opinion, or process?	I **think** it's too late. *my opinion (state)*	I'**m thinking** about it. *still deciding*
Fact, or complaint?	He always **locks** the gate. *a habit*	He'**s always losing** his keys! *always + -ing = annoyed*
Asking questions	**Do** you **work** here?	**Are** you **working** today?

Ask yourself: is it true in general, or only around now?

Signal words

PRESENT SIMPLE

always · usually · often · sometimes · never · every day · on Mondays

PRESENT CONTINUOUS

now · right now · at the moment · today · this week · these days · Look!

Frequency adverbs go before the main verb: I often walk

State verbs

no -ing

like · love · hate · prefer · want · need · know · believe · understand · remember · mean · belong · own · seem

*I **know** the answer*, not ~~*I'm knowing*~~.

*This saddle **belongs** to Philo.*

"I'm loving it" is advertising, not the rule

Two meanings

state or action

think	*I **think** so.* (opinion)	*I'**m thinking**.* (deciding)
have	*We **have** a tractor.* (own)	*We'**re having** lunch.* (eat)
see	*I **see**.* (understand)	*I'**m seeing** the vet.* (meet)
be	*He **is** lazy.* (always)	*He'**s being** lazy.* (today)

Is it a state or an action? Only actions take -ing

Spelling

-s and -ing

-es after s, sh, ch, x, o: *watches, washes, goes*

consonant + y → -ies: *study → studies* (but *plays*)

drop the e: *make → making*

double after a short vowel: *run → running, sit → sitting*

ie → y: *lie → lying, die → dying*

he, she, it: don't forget the s

How to make them

- Simple: *I work, she work**s** · **Do** you work? She **doesn't** work.*
- Continuous: **am / is / are + -ing** · ***Is** she working? I'm **not** working.*
- Not ~~Does she works?~~

Stories, jokes and commentary

- Present simple tells a story vividly: *So a farmer **walks** into a shop…*
- Sports and instructions: *He **passes**, he **shoots**! · You **add** the flour, then you **stir**.*

Spanish speakers, watch out

- *¿Qué haces?* = What **do** you do? (job) / What **are** you doing? (now)
- *¿Vienes?* = **Are** you coming?
- *Vivo aquí desde 2020* = I'**ve lived** here since 2020 (Grammar Guides 7).

Want more?

Sophia explains **The Instant and the Standing Rule** (Philo & Sophia, Lesson 1).

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