
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Grammar

Present simple and present continuous



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Sophie

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Sophie.

Neil

And me, Neil. Hello.

Sophie

Today we're talking about the present simple tense...

Neil

...and the present continuous tense. Coming up in today's programme:

Sophie

We'll take a look at positives, negatives, and question forms...

Neil

We'll find out when to use each tense...

Sophie

We'll hear some short forms...

Neil

And we'll have a quiz to test what we've learnt.

Sophie

But first: the present simple tense. We use it to talk about things that happen regularly. Here's Finn with an example:

Finn

John checks his email every morning.

Sophie

Thanks Finn. So the verb 'to check' is in the present simple – *John checks* – because he checks his email regularly – every morning.

Neil

We make the present simple with a subject plus a base verb – *I check, you go, we live, they wear*.

Sophie

For *he, she* and *it*, add an 's' to the verb.

Finn

I always wear a coat in the winter. My brother wears a jacket.

Neil

Now we also use the present simple to talk about facts and permanent situations. So we can say...

Finn

I work in the fashion industry. My sister lives in China.

Sophie

To make the present simple negative, use *don't* or *doesn't*. And there's no 's' on the end of the verb. Finn?

Finn

I don't work in the modelling industry. My brother doesn't like fashion.

Neil

For questions, use *do* or *does*.

Finn

Do your friends live in London? Does John check his email in the morning?

Neil

So that's present simple. Now: let's look at the present continuous tense. [Phone rings] ooh just a minute, let me get that... [to caller] Hello? No sorry, *I'm working at the moment*. Can I call you back? [hangs up phone] Sorry about that everyone...

Sophie

No problem...

Neil

So: I just said *I'm working at the moment*.

Sophie

Aha! A clever demonstration!

Neil

That's right – I said *I'm working at the moment*, because it's an activity that's happening now. I can say *I work at the BBC* in the present simple because my job is a permanent situation. But **right now at this moment** I'm doing the activity of working, so I use present continuous to say *I'm working at the moment*.

Sophie

Right. As well as activities, we use the present continuous tense for temporary situations like this:

Finn

My parents are staying with me this week. I'm sleeping on the sofa.

Sophie

Sorry to hear that Finn. To make the present continuous, use *am, is* or *are* plus an *i-n-g* verb.

Finn

I'm checking my email at the moment. Emily's wearing a pink hat today. They're eating dinner now.

Neil

And did you hear those short forms? The words *I am* are shortened to *I'm*...

Sophie

Emily is sounds like *Emily's*.

Neil

And *they are* sounds like *they're*. We'll have short forms in just a moment.

IDENT

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Neil

And today we're talking about the present simple tense...

Sophie

...and the present continuous.

Neil

Let's look at present continuous negatives. We make them with the little word *not*.

Finn

*I'm **not** wearing a raincoat because it isn't raining.*

Sophie

And here are those short forms again:

Neil

*I **am not** becomes...*

Sophie

*...**I'm not**.*

Neil

***Is not**...*

Sophie

*...**isn't**.*

Neil

And for *are not* we get...

Sophie

*...**aren't**.*

[Sound of Neil typing.]

Sophie

Umm Neil, are you sending an email?

Neil

Errr - yes... What are we doing? Are we talking about questions?

Sophie

Yes, we are.

Neil

Ooh, sorry. OK, back to the programme!

Sophie

Aha! Another clever demonstration! I said: *Are you sending an email?*

Neil

And I said: *Are we talking about questions?*

Sophie

And of course, we both asked present continuous yes/no questions.

Neil

And to make them, you just change the word order. Instead of **You are sending an email**, it's **Are you sending an email?** It's fine to put question words like 'Why' or 'What' at the start of the question.

Finn

What are we doing? Why are you sending an email?

Neil

So that's present continuous questions.

Sophie

So that means: it's time for a quiz. I'm going to say a sentence and you need to make it negative. Number 1. *Paolo speaks Chinese.*

Neil

Paolo doesn't speak Chinese.

Sophie

Now make this sentence into a yes/no question: *The children are playing a game.*

Neil

Are the children playing a game?

Sophie

And one more: this time, make a present continuous question starting with *why*. *Simon is learning Japanese.*

Neil

Why is Simon learning Japanese?

Sophie

And that's the end of the quiz – well done if you got them all right.

Neil

And that's also the end of the programme – but there's more about these tenses on our website at bbclearningenglish.com.

Sophie

Join us again for more 6 Minute Grammar.

All

Bye.