THEORY: PRESENT TENSES

Present Simple and Present Continuous

We use the present simple for:

- facts and permanent states. *Jane **works** as a nurse.*
- general truths and laws of nature. *The sun sets in the west.*
- habits and routines (with **always**, **usually**, etc). *She usually **goes** to the cinema twice a month.*
- timetables and programmes (in the future). *His plane **leaves** at ten o'clock next Friday.*
- sporting commentaries, reviews and narrations. *Terry **wins** the ball, **crosses** and Lampard **scores** for Chelsea.*
- feelings and emotions. *I **love** Mozart. His music is wonderful.*

The time expressions we use with the present simple are: *usually, often, always, every day/week/month/ year etc, in the morning/afternoon/evening, at night/the weekend, on Fridays, etc*

We use the present continuous (to be + verb -ing):

- for actions taking place at or around the moment of speaking. *Jean **is doing** her homework.*
- for temporary situations. *We **are fixing** the fence this week.*
- for fixed arrangements in the near future. ***I'm going** out with Tony tonight.*
- for currently changing and developing situations. *The temperature **is becoming** warmer and warmer.*
- with adverbs such as **always** to express anger or irritation at a repeated action. *She **is** always **taking** my things.*

The time expressions we use with the present continuous are: *now, at the moment, at present, these days, nowadays, still, today, tonight, etc*

Stative verbs are verbs which describe a state rather than an action, and so do not usually have a continuous tense. These verbs are:

- verbs of the senses (**see**, **hear**, **smell**, **taste**, **feel**, **look**, **sound**, **seem**, **appear**, etc). *Your perfume **smells** lovely.*
- verbs of perception (**know**, **believe**, **understand**, **realise**, **remember**, **forget**, etc). *I **know** what the problem is.*
- verbs which express feelings and emotions (**like**, **love**, **hate**, **enjoy**, **prefer**, **detest**, **desire**, **want**, etc). *Nick **enjoys** rock music.*
- some other verbs (**be**, **contain**, **include**, **belong**, **fit**, **need**, **matter**, **cost**, **own**, **want**, **owe**, **weigh**, **wish**, **have**, **keep**, etc). *Those jeans **cost** me a fortune.*

Some of these verbs can be used in continuous tenses, but with a difference in meaning.

Present Simple	Present Continuous
THINK *I **think** he will become a good teacher.* (= believe)	*They **are thinking** about buying a new car.* (= are considering)
HAVE *She **has** a huge house.* (= owns, possesses)	*I **am having** a fantastic time.* (= am experiencing) *She **is having** a bath.* (= is taking) *They **are having** dinner.* (= are eating)
SEE *I can **see** the park from my office.* (= it is visible) *I **see** what you mean.* (= understand)	*I'm **seeing** Mr Stewart at ten o'clock.* (= am meeting)
TASTE *The fish **tastes** delicious.* (= it is, has the flavour of)	*She is **tasting** the stew to see if it needs more pepper.* (= is testing)
SMELL *This rose **smells** lovely.* (= has the aroma)	*She is **smelling** the flowers.* (= is sniffing)
APPEAR *He **appears** to be going in the wrong direction.* (= seems to)	*He is **appearing** in a play at The Arts theatre.* (= is performing)
FIT *The jeans **fit** him perfectly.* (= are the right size)	*The technician **is fitting** a new air conditioner on the wall.* (= is attaching)

Note:

- The verb **enjoy** can be used in continuous tenses to express a specific preference. *My brother really **enjoys** playing football.* (general preference) **BUT** *He's **enjoying** the match very much. (specific preference)*
- The verbs **look** (when we refer to somebody's appearance), **feel** (experience a particular emotion), **hurt** and **ache** can be used in simple or continuous tenses with no difference in meaning. *I **feel** very sad. = I am **feeling** very sad.*

Present Perfect

We use the present perfect (**have + past participle**) for:

- an action that happened at an unstated time in the past. The emphasis is on the action, the time when it occurred is unimportant or unknown. *I **have washed** the car. Ann **has been** to London once.*
- an action which started in the past and continues up to the present, especially with stative verbs (see above) such as **be**, **have**, **like**, **know**, etc. *I **have known** the Browns for six years.*
- a recently completed action. *I **have painted** the house.*
- personal experiences or changes. *She **has put on** five kilos.*

The time expressions we use with the present perfect are: *for, since, already, always, just, ever, never, so far, today, this week/month etc, how long, lately, recently* and (in negations), *yet, by now, etc*

Present Perfect Continuous

We use the present perfect continuous (**have + been + verb -ing**):

- to put emphasis on the duration of an action which started in the past and continues up to the present. *We **have been decorating** the living room all morning.*
- for an action which started in the past and lasted for some time. It may still be continuing or has finished already with the result visible in the present. *He's soaking wet because it **has been raining** all morning.*
- to express anger, irritation or annoyance. *He **has been taking** my things without my permission.*
- for repeated actions in the past continuing to the present. *She has lost weight because she **has been dieting**.*

The time expressions we use with the present perfect continuous are: *for, since, how long, all day/morning/month etc, lately, recently*

Note: with the verbs **live**, **work**, **teach** and **feel** we can use the present perfect simple or the present perfect continuous with no difference in meaning. *She **has worked/has been working** as a teacher for the last eight years.*