

STATIVE vs ACTION VERBS

STATES	ACTIONS
A state means something <u>staying the same</u> : The flat is clean The box contained old books.	An action means <u>something happening</u> : I'm cleaning the flat. He put the books in the box.
State verbs <u>cannot usually be continuous</u> : The box is containing old books.	Action verbs can be <u>simple or continuous</u> : He was putting the books in the box.

The most common stative verb is **THE VERB TO BE** . Other stative verbs are:

- verbs that describe **mental processes**: *believe, feel, remember, doubt, gather, know, mean, think, understand, expect, admit, agree, imagine, realise, suppose*
- verbs of **appearance**: *appear, seem, look, resemble*
- verbs that describe **emotional states**: *love, care, dislike, hate, want, wish, prefer, like, hope*
- verbs of **bodily sensation**: *ache, feel sick, hurt, itch*
- verbs that describe **senses**: *hear, smell, taste, see, sound, look, feel*
- **possession**: *own, belong, need, owe, have, possess, contain*
- **others**: *promise, refuse, agree, deny, depend, fit, involve, matter*

We can **use stative verbs in the continuous** form when...:

- they have an **active meaning**:
*I'm **tasting** this to see if it's salty.*
*She's **behaving** rather pesty.*
- when they emphasise **change or development**:
*More schools **will be including** Shakespeare in their literature classes.*

Sometimes using Simple or Continuous involves a **change in meaning**:

STATES (simple tenses)	ACTIONS (simple or continuous)
I think you're right.	I'm thinking about the problem.
We have three cars.	We're having lunch.
The picture looks nice.	I'm looking at this picture.
She appears very nervous.	She's appearing in this film.
The bag weighed 5 kilos.	They're weighing my bag.
These flowers smell very sweet.	Come and smell these flowers!

Some examples with the verb **TO BE**:

PERMANENT QUALITY	TEMPORARY BEHAVIOUR
Clare is a very sociable person.	Andrew is being very sociable today.
That man is an idiot.	You're being an idiot this morning.

We can use some state verbs in the continuous to talk about a **short period of time**:

PERMANENT STATE (simple tenses)	SHORT PERIOD (continuous)
I love parties.	I'm loving this party.
Holidays cost a lot of money.	This trip is costing me a lot of money.
I work as a receptionist.	I am working as a receptionist.