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The simple Present

I-Present simple tense: Form

1- Verbs with third person singular subjects

	Question word	Does or doesn't	Subject	Does not or doesn't	Base form	Base form + s	
Affirmative			The race			starts	in Paris
Question	Why	does doesn't	this machine		make		a noise
Negative			She	doesn't	get up		early

2- Verbs with other subjects

	Question word	Do or don't	subject	Do not or don't	Base form	
Affirmative			trees		lose	Their leaves
Question	why	Do Don't	You you		Want want	To eat To eat
Negative						

S-forms of verbs:

The s-form (calls) is a finite verb in the 3rd person singular present tense: He/ she calls every day.

Pronunciation 1: /iz/

Pass passes ; buzz buzzes push pushes catch catches

Pronunciation (2): /z/

Call calls flee flees try tries

Pronunciation (3): /s/

Cut cuts hop hops lock locks

Meaning expressed by the simple present (non-progressive present)

The present simple is used to describe general actions, events and states when we have no reason to think of them as being temporary or limited in time.

1-Present and timeless states: general facts

The simple present is used with statements which apply to all time. These include scientific, mathematical and descriptive statements. Examples:

- Ice melts at 0°
- Steel is a strong metal.
- Two and two make four.

2-Present tense and stative verbs

The present simple is also used to talk about states (stative verbs). They are not timeless in the sense they have an end unlike statements related to facts (see above) whose time span is endless.

a- Relational verbs:

- This land belongs to the National Trust
- Those exercises look difficult
- She seems happy

b-Cognition verbs:

- He knows Morocco quite well.
- He thinks she doesn't deserve to win.

c-Perception verbs

Verbs of perception are also included with stative verbs. We, however, tend to use 'can' and 'can't' with these perception verbs more often than the present simple:

- I can see them coming.
- Can you hear them?

3-Repeated events in the present

The present tense expresses a series of events which cover an unspecified time. Adjuncts of time, frequency, place, destination, etc often accompany statements in the Present which express repeated or recurrent events. Examples:

- He works for an insurance company
- They spend most of their holidays abroad.
- He eats his dinner at one o'clock.

4-Instantaneous events in the present

(The present simple tense is used to talk about events which do not have any duration beyond speech time (the moment of speaking).

Performative:

- I warn you that this gun is loaded.

Running commentaries:

Sports commentators use the present simple. Example:

- Serena Williams serves to Kim Clijsters and runs to the net.

Demonstrations

-I place the fruit in the blender, press gently and then pour out the liquid.

5-Verbs which change things

We also use the present simple in making pronouncements which change something. This involves a limited number of verbs (e.g. arrest, baptise, declare, pronounce) known as performative verbs. Examples:

- I pronounce you man and wife
- I declare the fete open.

7-Reference to past events: Past narrative

The present simple can be used to refer to past events in certain limited ways.

a- In newspaper headlines

Shias reach deal to form Iraqi government

MPs ban fees for Sinn Féin

Thousands flee persecution.

b- In relating incidents

-He was only an average athlete, and then suddenly, he wins two Olympic medals.

-I was just about to go to bed when all of a sudden there's a knock at the door and Sam rushes in.

The present simple in the sentences above is also called '**historic present**'. They are often preceded by adjuncts signalling immediacy such as 'suddenly', 'all of a sudden'.

When recounting the plots of books and films, **the historic present** can also be used:

It's one of Evelyns Augh's best, I think, because he's got this situation where a man is going off to report on some trouble somewhere in America. I've forgotten the details now but he gets on the wrong train and ends up in the wrong place—and finds that he's in a place that's perfectly quiet and perfectly innocent and there's no story—and so he just writes one—and within a week he's managed to create riots, you know, the whole place is in a furore.

c- In reporting information

The present simple is used with verbs of communication (verbal processes: say tell).

Examples:

- The weatherman forecasts heavy showers in the north
- Peter tells me he has changed his job
- I hear you're moving house very soon.

EXERCISE 7 Fill in the blanks with the base form or the -s form.

EXAMPLE:

Americans love (love) pets.My son loves (love) his new kitten.

1. My girlfriend gives (give) her dog a present on his birthday.
2. People get (get) affection from animals.
3. Everyone needs (need) affection.
4. It costs (cost) a lot of money to have a pet.
5. Some pet owners talk (talk) to their pets on the phone.
6. My daughter wants (want) a puppy for her birthday.
7. My neighbor's dog barks (bark) all the time.
8. Some people travel (travel) with their dogs.
9. Forty percent of Americans have (have) at least one dog.
10. My brother has (have) three dogs.
11. Dogs protect (protect) their owners.
12. My family loves (love) animals.
13. Nobody knows (know) the dog's age.
14. Everybody thinks (think) that puppies and kittens are cute.

EXERCISE 8 Write the negative form of the underlined verb.

EXAMPLE:

We have two cats. We don't have a dog.

1. My cats eat special food. They don't eat food from our table.
2. My cats like tuna. They don't like chicken.
3. One cat sleeps in my bed. She doesn't sleep alone.
4. I buy cat food. I don't buy dog food.
5. My landlord allows cats. He doesn't allow dogs.
6. My cats need attention. They don't need a lot of my time.
7. Some cats go outside. My cats don't go outside.
8. You like dogs. You don't like cats.
9. We have cats. We don't have children.
10. I like cats. My sister doesn't like cats.

II-Present progressive/ continuous

The present progressive is used to refer to something temporary which has begun and has not finished, something which is completable and is in the process of being completed. Events can be constant, but they can also be repeated or intermittent.

1-States and the progressive

Generally, stative verbs do not occur in the progressive:

- *I am liking the course
- *He was knowing English

There are a few exceptions where stative verbs occur in the progressive. They indicate a type of behaviour with limited duration:

- You are being obstinate
- He is being silly.

Some verbs which are ordinarily stative (verbs expressing emotion or attitude), when used in the progressive, indicate tentativeness:

- I'm hoping to take my exam soon
- I was wondering whether you could help me.

Durative situations and the progressive

The use of the progressive with durative (dynamic) verbs which have an end point (decide, write, sew, rain, ripen, ache, etc.) is to stretch out the durative phase of the process before the end-point:

- He is writing out the invitations
- She is growing up into a beautiful girl
- The apricots are ripening well.

The habitual progressive

The progressive here is used with dynamic verbs to refer to events that repeatedly occur, with the implication that they take place over a limited period of time

- She's writing some short stories.
- He's teaching in a comprehensive school

Things happening now

Acts, events and the progressive

The use of the progressive with acts and events results in stretching out the verbal action; it becomes a sequence.