

# Unit 2

## Present continuous and present simple 2

A

We often use the present simple and present continuous in stories and jokes in informal spoken English to create the impression that events are happening now. This can make them more direct and exciting and hold people's attention:

Reminder → A1-A5

- ☐ She **goes** up to this man and **looks** straight into his eyes. He's not **wearing** his glasses, and he **doesn't recognise** her ...
- ☐ This man's **playing** golf when a kangaroo **bounds** up to him, **grabs** his club and **hits** his ball about half a mile ...

The main events are usually described in sequence using the present simple and longer background events are described using the present continuous.

In narratives and anecdotes the present simple can be used to highlight an event. Often it is used after past tenses and with a phrase such as **suddenly** or **all of a sudden**:

- ☐ I was sitting in the park, reading a newspaper, when *all of a sudden* this dog **jumps** at me.



B

We also use the present simple and present continuous in live commentaries (for example, on sports events) when the report takes place at the same time as the action:

- ☐ King **serves** to the left-hand court and Adams **makes** a wonderful return. She's **playing** magnificent tennis in this match ...

C

We can use the present simple in phrases such as **It says here**, **I hear**, **I gather**, **I see**, **I understand** and **They say**, **(Someone) says**, **(Someone) tells me** to introduce news that we have heard, read, seen (e.g. on television), or been told. We can also use past tenses (e.g. **It said here**, **I heard**):

- ☐ **I gather** you're worried about Pedro.
- ☐ Sophia **tells me** you're thinking of emigrating.
- ☐ Professor Hendriks is at the conference and **I hear** she's an excellent speaker.

D

The present simple is often used in news headlines to talk about events that have recently happened:

**SECOND QUAKE HITS JAPAN**

**FIRE BREAKS OUT IN HOTEL ROOM**

**SCIENTISTS FIND ICE ON THE MOON**

**FOREIGN MINISTER RESIGNS**

We can use the present simple to refer to the contents of books, films, newspapers, etc:

- ☐ Thompson **gives** a list of the largest European companies in Chapter 6.
- ☐ At the beginning of the book, three men **find** \$4 million in a crashed plane.
- ☐ In the film, Loni Baranski **takes** the role of a private detective.

E

We can use the present continuous with adverbs such as **always**, **constantly**, **continually** or **forever** to emphasise that something is done so often that it is characteristic of a person, group or thing:

- ☐ a: I think I'll stay here after all. b: You're **constantly changing** your mind.
- ☐ Jacob is a really kind person. He's **always offering** to help me with my work.

We often use this pattern to indicate disapproval. The past continuous is used in a similar way with these adverbs (e.g. **Was** Olivia **always asking** you for money, too?).

We can use the present continuous to describe something we regularly do at a certain time:

- ☐ At eight o'clock I'm usually **driving** to work, so phone me on my mobile.
- ☐ Seven o'clock is a bit early. We're generally **eating** then.