50 Action and state verbs

Verbs that describe actions or events are known as "action" or "dynamic" verbs, whereas those that describe states are known as "state" or "stative" verbs.

See also:

Present simple 1 Present continuous 4 Past simple 7 Past continuous 10

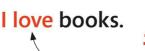
50.1 ACTION AND STATE VERBS

Action verbs usually describe what people or things do. State verbs usually say how things are or how someone feels.

ACTION VERB



STATE VERB





State verbs are not usually used in the continuous form.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Dominic is eating ice cream.



Gayle is lying on the couch.



I don't eat meat. I'm a vegetarian.



I want to go away somewhere.



She has two cats and a dog.



We've known each other for years.



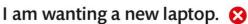
COMMON MISTAKES USING STATE VERBS IN CONTINUOUS TENSES

Most state verbs cannot be used in continuous forms.



State verbs are only usually used in the simple form.

I want a new laptop.



State verbs can't usually be used in continuous forms.

USING STATE VERBS IN CONTINUOUS FORMS 50.2

Some verbs can be both action and state verbs. When these verbs are describing an action, they can be used in continuous forms.

ACTION



I am thinking about taking up fencing.

[Right now, I'm considering taking up fencing.]



STATE

I think fencing is a great sport.

[In my opinion, fencing is a great sport.]



The chef was tasting his soup.

[The chef is testing the soup's flavor.]



This soup tasted disgusting!

[The soup has a disgusting flavor.]



I'm seeing some friends for lunch tomorrow.

[I'm meeting some friends tomorrow.]



I saw some birds at the park yesterday.

There were some birds at the park.]

A few state verbs can be used in continuous forms, keeping their stative meaning. The use of a continuous form emphasizes a change, development, or temporary situation.

CONTINUOUS FORM



SIMPLE FORM



Are you feeling better today? You seemed sick yesterday.



How do you feel about modern art?



We're sounding much better than usual!



wish they'd stop. they sound terrible!





My leg <mark>hurts</mark>. Maybe I should go to the doctor.