

# 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

I { **read** / **am reading** } a book. 

Action verbs can be used in simple forms and continuous forms.

### STATE VERB

I **love** books. 

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.



I **want** a new laptop. ✓

State verbs are only usually used in the simple form.

I **am wanting** a new laptop. ✗

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

## 50.2 USING STATE VERBS IN CONTINUOUS FORMS

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



Are you **feeling** better today?  
You **seemed** sick yesterday.

### SIMPLE FORM



How do you **feel** about modern art?



We're **sounding** much better than usual!



I wish they'd stop. they **sound** terrible!



My leg **is** really **hurting** this morning.



My leg **hurts**. Maybe I should go to the doctor.