

Verbs can show actions or states.

Action verbs show that something is happening. Examples are *play, take, stop, buy* or *cry*.

A **stative (or state verb) verb** is a verb describing a state of mind or of being. Something stays the same.

State verbs express things like *having* or *owning, feelings, beliefs, opinions* and *being*.

We can say, *I really like your new shirt.*



In this sentence I am not doing anything,

I'm feeling something. *Like* is a state or stative verb.

In the sentence "*These shoes belong to my sister.*"

The shoes are not doing anything. *Belong* is a stative verb.



There are many state verbs.

Here are some state verbs that are used for thinking: *believe, suppose, know, understand, recognize, prefer, realize, remember, mean, imagine, agree, disagree, doubt.*

Here are some that describe how we feel: *hope, want, wish, detest, hate, loathe, dislike, like, love, appreciate, adore, care.*

These ones are used to describe possession:
possess, own, belong, contain, cost, have (when it means own).

The verbs describing the five senses are usually state verbs:
look, hear, taste, smell, feel. (However, sometimes they can be actions. See below for an example of 'taste' as an action.)

State verbs are **not** used with the **continuous**. Here are some examples of this:

State verb: own - ~~I'm owning this car.~~ (Wrong) Correct: *I own this car.*

Action verb: drive - *I am driving this car.* Correct.

State verb: know - ~~I'm knowing the answer.~~ (Wrong) Correct: *I know the answer.*

Action verb: tell - *I am telling the teacher the answer.* Correct.

Some verbs have different meanings and can be an action or a state depending on the meaning that is being used. e.g. Have can mean 'eat' (an action), and 'possess or own' (a state).

State verb: *have* (own): ~~I am having a large house near Richmond.~~ (Wrong) Correct: *I have a large house near Richmond.*

Action verb: *have* (eat): *I'm having brunch with my friends now. Can I call you back?* Correct.

Another example of a verb with different meanings is fit.

State verb: *fit* (meaning whether something is the right size in clothes): ~~This dress is fitting me very well.~~ (Wrong)
Correct: *This dress fits me very well.*

Action verb: *fit* (meaning installing or putting together): *The carpet layers are fitting the new carpet downstairs.* Correct.



Other verbs like this include:

taste - Action: *The chef is tasting the soup to see if it is okay.* State: *This soup tastes delicious.*

admire - Action: *I'm just admiring your new painting.* It's great. State: *I really admire her for her bravery.*

weigh - Action: *The butcher is weighing the meat now.* State: *This meat weighs six kilograms.*

see - Action: *I'm seeing Neil at three o'clock.* State: *I can see a black cat on the piano.*

think - Action: *What are you thinking about? You're looking serious.* State: *What do you think of this statue?*

Sometimes we can use some state verbs in the continuous when we see something as an active thought or feeling for a length of time, not something that is a permanent state.

I enjoy romantic comedies. (permanent) *I am really enjoying this movie.* (active feeling for a period of time)

Some verbs can **never** be continuous because they always express states.

Examples of these are *depend on, belong to, contain, desire, know, own, possess, prefer, seem.*



Exercise 1:

Right or Wrong? Write '*right*' or '*wrong*' beside each sentence. Should each verb be in the continuous or not?

1. I'm having lunch with Jo tomorrow.
2. She was seeing a tall, dark-haired man outside in the garden.
3. He is enjoying the new Harry Potter.
4. I am hating tomatoes. I have never liked them.
5. And now the Prime Minister is picking up her spoon. The Prime Minister is tasting her soup.
Yes, she is smiling! The soup is okay.
6. I am thinking we should go to a movie. Do you agree?
7. He is owning four cars.
8. I am not knowing her very well. She is not a close friend.
9. I am really liking your new haircut.
10. Your hair is looking fantastic tonight.



Exercise 2:

Choose the correct answer from the choices in the sentences below.

1. At the airport I ***was recognizing/am recognizing/recognized*** the man I had to pick up from the photo the company had given me.
2. He ***has been deserving/is deserving/deserves*** a raise because he is such a good employee.
3. I ***was seeing/am seeing/see*** what you mean. And I agree with you.
4. I ***will be thinking/ 'm thinking/think*** of going to Boston for my vacation next month.
5. Every morning when I wake up I ***had smelt/am smelling/can smell*** wonderful cooking smells from the hotel kitchen.

Answer Key:

Exercise 1:

1. right, 2. wrong, 3. right, 4. wrong, 5. right, 6. wrong, 7. wrong, 8. wrong, 9. wrong, 10. right.

Exercise 2

1. recognized, 2. deserves, 3. see, 4. I'm thinking, 5. can smell.

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