

THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS TENSE

(I am doing)

Look at these sentences :

1. It is 12:45 now. Those men are praying; they're performing the noon congregational prayer.
2. The chemist is in the laboratory. He is testing a chemical substance.
3. Please be quiet; I am trying to concentrate.

The underlined verbs are in the Present Continuous Tense. We use this tense mainly when we are talking about the present time. The verb form consists of two words:

am		I am		
is	+ ———	ing	He is/She is/It is	+ (working)
are			We are/You are/They are	

Note that not all verbs may be used in the present continuous tense. The following verbs, for example, are normally used in the present simple tense:

like	remember	contain	mean	want
dislike	forget	consist	think (= believe)	need
love	understand	belong	have (= possess)	realize
hate	comprehend	seem	prefer	suppose

Because the present continuous tense usually refers to the time of speaking, it is often used with time expressions like "now," "at present," "at this moment," "nowadays," etc.

However, this tense may be used with a future meaning — when you are talking about what you have already arranged to do; e.g.

A: What are you doing tomorrow evening?

(Not "What do you do...?")

B: I'm going to the Book Exhibition. (Not "I go...")

A: Are you meeting them at the airport?

B: I can't. I'm working on my thesis tomorrow morning.

Do NOT use "will" to talk about what you have arranged to do:

- What *are you doing* this evening? (Not "What will you do?")
- My brother-in-law is getting married next Thursday.
(Not "He will get....")

Exercise 1

Put the verbs in parentheses into the Present Continuous Tense:

1. This is the month of Ramadan. Muslims all over the world (fast).
2. You cannot meet the professor now; he (give) a lecture.
3. A: "What are you doing there?"
B: "I (look) up some difficult words in the dictionary."
4. A: "Are you busy now?"
B: "No, I (not do) anything at the moment."
5. A: "When you (leave) for Makkah?"
B: "I (think) of going on the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah."
6. A: "What you (do) on Wednesday evening?"
B: "I (meet) an old friend of mine at the airport."
7. I wonder why you always (borrow) money from others.
(Note that the speaker here wants to express annoyance.)