

Active vs. Stative Verbs Comparison Table

This table shows how some common English verbs can have **two different meanings**. When the verb describes a **state**, it usually **does not** take the **-ing** form. When it describes an **action or temporary activity**, it **can** be used in the continuous tense.

Verb	Stative Meaning (No -ing)	Example	Active Meaning (-ing Possible)	Example
think	Have an opinion	<i>I think this is a good idea.</i>	Consider or reflect	<i>I'm thinking about changing jobs.</i>
have	Own or possess	<i>She has a new laptop.</i>	Experience, eat, or do	<i>We're having dinner.</i>
see	Understand or perceive	<i>I see what you mean.</i>	Meet, visit, or arrange to meet	<i>I'm seeing my dentist tomorrow.</i>
look	Appear	<i>You look tired.</i>	Search for or direct your eyes	<i>She's looking for her keys.</i>
feel	Experience an emotion or physical condition	<i>I feel happy today.</i>	Touch or examine	<i>The tailor is feeling the fabric.</i>
taste	Have a particular flavour	<i>The soup tastes delicious.</i>	Try food to check flavour	<i>The chef is tasting the soup.</i>
smell	Have an odour	<i>The flowers smell wonderful.</i>	Sniff intentionally	<i>The dog is smelling the flowers.</i>
hear	Perceive sound	<i>I hear music.</i>	Receive news or listen in a specific situation*	<i>We're hearing from applicants this week.</i>
appear	Seem	<i>She appears nervous.</i>	Perform or make a public appearance	<i>The singer is appearing on TV tonight.</i>
be	Describe permanent qualities	<i>He is very patient.</i>	Describe temporary behaviour	<i>He is being very patient today.</i>
weigh	Have a certain weight	<i>The package weighs 5 kg.</i>	Measure weight	<i>The clerk is weighing the vegetables.</i>
measure	Have a size	<i>The room measures 20 square metres.</i>	Find the size of something	<i>She's measuring the table.</i>
fit	Be the correct size	<i>These shoes fit perfectly.</i>	Install or attach	<i>They're fitting new windows.</i>
mind	Object to something	<i>I don't mind waiting.</i>	Take care of	<i>She's minding the children.</i>
expect	Believe something will happen	<i>I expect he'll arrive soon.</i>	(Rare in continuous; usually stative) —	

Verbs That Are Almost Always Stative

These verbs rarely, if ever, appear in continuous tenses.

Category	Common Verbs	Example
Thoughts & Knowledge	know, believe, understand, remember, forget, realize, recognize	<i>I know the answer.</i>
Preferences & Feelings	love, like, dislike, hate, prefer, need, want, wish	<i>She loves reading.</i>
Possession	own, possess, belong, contain, include	<i>This bag belongs to me.</i>
Relationships	consist, depend, involve	<i>Success depends on practice.</i>

Note: Some of these verbs occasionally appear in the continuous tense in advertising, literature, or informal speech for emphasis.

For example, "**I'm loving it!**" is grammatically unusual but widely accepted because it emphasizes enjoyment at the present moment.

Quick Tip 💡

Before using a continuous tense, ask yourself:

Is the verb describing an action happening now, or is it describing a state?

- **Action** → Continuous is often correct.
✓ *She is cooking dinner.*
- **State** → Use a simple tense.
✓ *She knows the recipe.*

This simple question will help you avoid one of the most common grammar mistakes made by English learners.