UNIT 4

Present continuous and present simple (2) (**I am doing** and **I do**)

A

We use continuous tenses only for actions and happenings (they **are eating** / it **is raining** etc.). Some verbs (for example, **know** and **like**) are *not* action verbs. You cannot say 'I am knowing' or 'they are liking'; you can only say '**I know**', '**they like**'.

The following verbs are not normally used in continuous tenses:

like	love	hate	want	need	prefer	
know	realise	suppose	mean	understand	believe	remember
belong	contain	consist	depend	seem		

- I'm hungry. I **want** something to eat. (*not* 'I'm wanting')
- Do you **understand** what I **mean**?
- Ann **doesn't seem** very happy at the moment.

When **think** means 'believe', do *not* use the continuous:

- What **do you think** (= believe) will happen? (*not* 'what are you thinking')

but

- You look serious. What **are you thinking** about? (= What is going on in your mind?)
- **I'm thinking** of giving up my job. (= I am considering)

When **have** means 'possess' etc., do *not* use the continuous (see Unit 17):

- We're enjoying our holiday. We **have** a nice room in the hotel. (*not* 'we're having')

but

- We're enjoying our holiday. **We're having** a great time.

B

See hear smell taste

We normally use the present simple (*not* continuous) with these verbs:

- Do you **see** that man over there? (*not* 'are you seeing')
- This room **smells**. Let's open a window.

We often use **can** + **see/hear/smell/taste**:

- Listen! **Can** you **hear** something?

But you can use the continuous with **see** (**I'm seeing**) when the meaning is 'having a meeting with' (especially in the future – see Unit 19A):

- I'm **seeing** the manager tomorrow morning.

C

He is selfish and **He is being selfish**

The present continuous of **be** is **I am being / he is being / you are being** etc.

I'm being = 'I'm behaving / I'm acting'. Compare:

- I can't understand why he's being so selfish. He isn't usually like that.
  (being selfish = behaving selfishly at the moment)

but

- He never thinks about other people. He is very selfish. (*not* 'he is being')
  (= he is selfish generally, not only at the moment)

We use **am/is/are being** to say how somebody is behaving. It is not usually possible in other sentences:

- It's hot today. (*not* 'it is being hot')
- Sarah is very tired. (*not* 'is being tired')

D

Look and **feel**

You can use the present simple or continuous when you say how somebody looks or feels now:

- You **look** well today. *or* You're **looking** well today.
- How **do you feel** now? *or* How **are you feeling** now?

but

- I usually **feel** tired in the morning. (*not* 'I'm usually feeling')

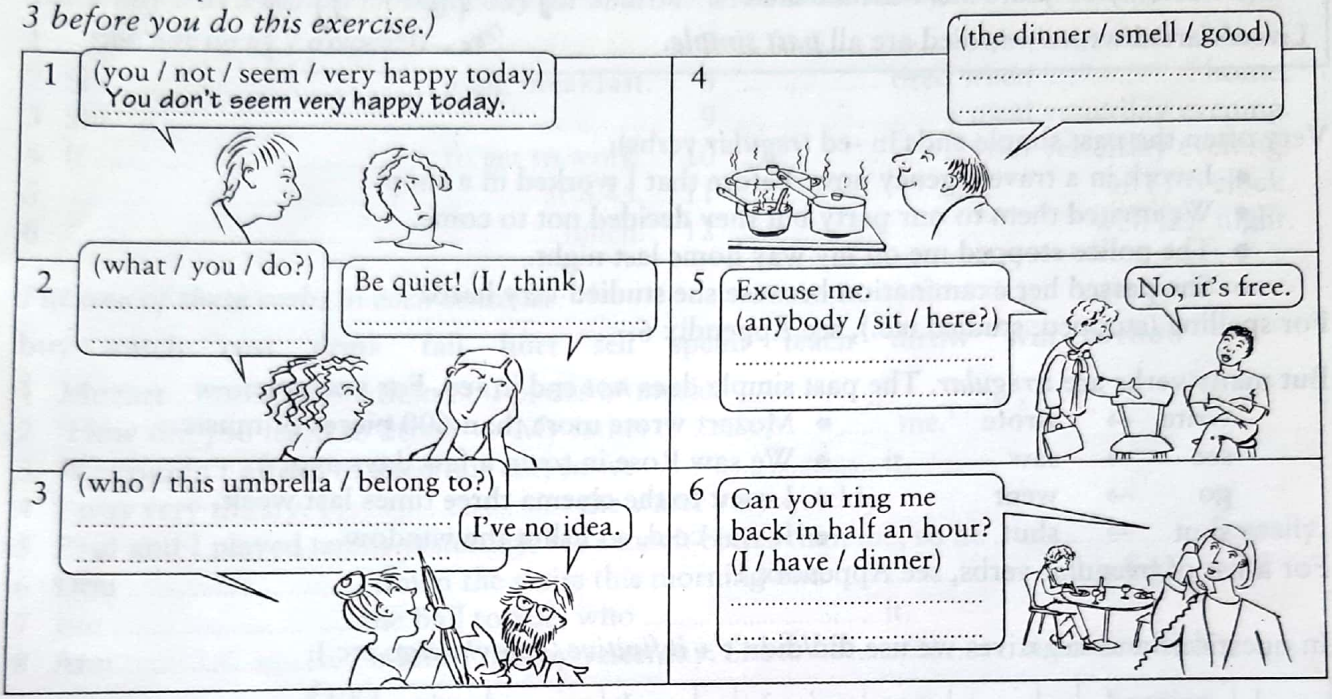
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EXERCISES

4.1 *Are the underlined verbs right or wrong? Correct the ones that are wrong.*

1 I'm seeing the manager tomorrow morning. RIGHT
2 I'm feeling hungry. Is there anything to eat? .....
3 Are you believing in God? .....
4 This sauce is great. It's tasting really good. .....
5 I'm thinking this is your key. Am I right? .....

4.2 *Look at the pictures. Use the words in brackets to make sentences. (You should also study Unit 3 before you do this exercise.)*



4.3 *Put the verb into the correct form, present continuous or present simple.*

1 Are you hungry? ...Do you want... something to eat? (you/want)
2 Jill is interested in politics but she ..... to a political party. (not/belong)
3 Don't put the dictionary away. I ..... it. (use)
4 Don't put the dictionary away. I ..... it. (need)
5 Who is that man? What ..... ? (he/want)
6 Who is that man? Why ..... at us? (he/look)
7 George says he's 80 years old but nobody ..... him. (believe)
8 She told me her name but I ..... it now. (not/remember)
9 I ..... of selling my car. (think) Would you be interested in buying it?
10 I ..... you should sell your car. (think) You ..... it very often. (not/use)
11 I used to drink a lot of coffee but these days I ..... tea. (prefer)
12 Air ..... mainly of nitrogen and oxygen. (consist)

4.4 *Complete the sentences using the most suitable form of* be. *Sometimes you must use the simple* (am/is/are) *and sometimes the continuous is more suitable* (am/is/are being).

1 I can't understand why ...he's being... so selfish. He isn't usually like that.
2 Jack ..... very nice to me at the moment. I wonder why.
3 You'll like Jill when you meet her. She ..... very nice.
4 Normally you are very sensible, so why ..... so silly about this matter?
5 Why isn't Sarah at work today? ..... ill?

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