

The Continuous Aspect

The **continuous aspect** focuses on the action and its duration (how long it lasts), rather than the result. It is used to show that an activity is temporary, and its duration is limited.

In contrast to the continuous aspect, we usually use simple tenses to talk about facts, permanent situations, finished actions and habits. Some verbs – called state verbs – are not usually used in the continuous form, e.g. verbs that describe personal feelings (*love, prefer*), the senses (*hear, smell*) and thoughts (*believe, understand*).

USE:

We use the **continuous aspect** to talk about:

- actions that we see happening over a period of time.
We've been waiting here for two hours!
- actions in progress when another thing happens.
Stella was cooking when I called her.
- temporary or incomplete situations.
Tina is using the small office until they take care of the mould in hers.
- repeated actions (that may be annoying).
He's always borrowing stuff that he never returns.
- situations in the process of changing.
The pandemic is advancing rapidly.
- plans (often using the past continuous)
We were thinking of redecorating this room.
- tentative ideas (to avoid being too direct with a request)
I was wondering if you could help me with my project.
- actions in progress at a particular time.
Mr Richards is having lunch at the moment. Can you call later?