

The Four Present Tenses and their Uses

There are four present tenses in English. Use the present tense to talk about something that is going on now or that is true now and any time. In an academic context, present tenses are central, both in scientific articles and oral presentations.

■ Simple present:

Form: Use the base form of a verb, adding an /s/ to the end of the verb if the subject is singular.

-> to express habits or routine:

"I **brush** my teeth twice a day"

-> to express general facts:

"Roses **are** red, cats **drink** milk"

-> to express a narrative style (to narrate past events):

"So I'm right in front of the waiter and suddenly, he **refuses** to take my order. So I **ask** him "why?""

■ Present continuous:

Form: The present tense of "to be" (am/is/are)+ verb + ing

-> to talk about the "real present", i.e the facts that are happening right now:

"I'm **sitting** at the back of the class during my English lesson"

"I'm **having** a hot chocolate for breakfast"

-> to talk about an action that is not performed at the moment, but is not over:

"This semester I'm **taking** an English class with other researchers"

"My car **is getting** repaired"

■ Present perfect:

Form: Have or has + past form of a verb

-> an action started in the past that has been completed in, or has relevance to, the present

"He **has studied** this subject for three months now"

"I **have felt** sick several times after eating in that kebab already"

-> Recently completed actions:

“ They **have finished** their meeting so they must be in the hallway now”

-> Separate actions that happened in the past and may happen again in the future

"He **has travelled** overseas several times"

- **Present perfect continuous:**

Form: Have or has + been + verb + ing

-> to express actions that took place in the past, continue in the present and may continue in the future

Note: the difference between the present perfect and the present perfect continuous is that you insist on the duration or the outcome with the latter

“I’ve **been sitting** on this chair, lights off, drinking coffee”

“I’ve **been waiting** for you the entire morning !”