**State verbs and action verbs**

*State verbs*

State verbs express states or conditions which are relatively static. They include verbs of perception, cognition, the senses, emotion and state of being:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Examples of state verbs | | | | |
| appear believe belong consider consist contain | cost doubt exist fit hate hear | have know like love matter mean | need owe own prefer remember resemble | seem suppose suspect understand want wish |

State verbs are not normally used in continuous forms:

~~I am needing a new phone~~. 🡪 I **need**a new phone.  
~~Who is this bag belonging to? 🡪~~ Who **does**this bag **belong**to?  
~~They are seeming tired~~. 🡪 They **seem**tired.

*Action verbs*

Action verbs (also called dynamic verbs) express activities, processes, momentary actions or physical conditions:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Examples of action verbs | | | | |
| ache arrive ask call change cook | dance eat fall feel go grow | have help hit hurt itch kick | knock leave melt  read say shrink | sing speak talk throw travel watch |

They may be used in continuous forms:

Who **was**he **dancing**with?  
Someone'**s knocking** at the door.  
I**'ve been reading** this book for weeks.

*State verbs in the continuous form*

Some state verbs may be used in the continuous form if they refer to a temporary action or an action in progress at a certain moment, rather than a permanent attitude:

I'**m having** second thoughts about moving abroad.  
Jones **is appearing** in Hamlet this evening.  
You'**re looking great** in those jeans.

There are also state verbs which may be used in the continuous form, but with a different, active meaning:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stative meaning | Active meaning |
| Do you have a car? (own) | They are having dinner at the moment. (eating) |
| You are my best friend. (it's a fact) | She's being silly again. (behaving in a silly way) |
| That soup smells good. (has a good smell) | He is smelling the soup. (sniffing at) |
| This milk tastes sour. (has a sour taste) | I was just tasting the food. (testing) |
| You look great! (your current appearance) | He was looking out the window when I saw him. (directing his eyes towards) |
| What do you see? (notice with eyes) | I'm seeing my dentist this afternoon. (visiting) |
| I don't hear well. (pick up with ears) | The judge will be hearing the evidence later this week. (listening to) |
| I expect that you are tired. (assume) | Are you expecting visitors this evening? (waiting for them to arrive) |
| I feel that you are wrong. (think) | How have you been feeling? (asking about physical state) |
| This melon weighs 2 kg. (its weight is 2 kg) | He is weighing the melon. (measuring its weight) |

Naturally, we can use the verbs with the active meaning in the simple form, too:

How often **do**you **see**your dentist?   
They usually **have**dinner at 6.

But we cannot use the verbs with the stative meaning in the continuous form:

~~This melon is weighing 2 kilos.~~  ~~The soup was smelling good~~.