

The Present Simple Tense

The simple present tense is used in English for the following purposes:

- Repeated actions
- Simple statements of fact
- World truths
- With verbs of the senses and mental processes
- In jokes and story telling
- To refer to the future

How to form the present simple

Repeated actions

The present simple tense is very often used with adverbs of repeated time. Look at these examples (the adverbs are shown in bold):

- I **always** come to school by car.
- She **frequently** arrives here before me.
- He **never** forgets to do his homework.
- I **often** catch the late bus home.
- I play football **on Saturdays**.
- **Once a year** I fly back to visit my family in Korea.
- The classrooms are cleaned **every evening** after school.
- She **sometimes** loses her temper, but it doesn't happen very **often**.
- Do you **ever** eat in the cafeteria?

- Does your father speak English **every day**?

Simple statements of fact

When we want to state a fact or ask a question without any time reference, we use the present simple tense.

- I live in Frankfurt.
- She plays football but she doesn't play tennis.
- For breakfast he eats rice and drinks cold milk.
- She works very hard.
- My friend speaks four languages.
- It rains a lot in Germany.
- I don't like horror films!
- Do you smoke?
- Does your sister have any children?
- How much does it cost to buy an apartment in Frankfurt?

World truths

Statements about rules of nature and the way the world is are in the present simple tense.

- The sun sets in the West.
- Most babies learn to speak when they are about two years old.
- Water boils at 100° Celsius.
- Trees lose their leaves in the fall.
- Few people live to be 100 years old.
- Wood floats on water.

- Does it snow in the Sahara desert?
- Do elephants live longer than humans?
- Money doesn't guarantee happiness.
- Flowers don't grow in the winter.

Verbs of the senses and mental processes

The present simple tense is used for many verbs of thinking, feeling and sensing. The most common words are:

like	love	prefer	know	understand	
hate	need	want	believe	remember	
see	hear	taste	smell	look	

- She likes it in Germany.
- I love lying in bed late on Sunday mornings.
- I need to know right now.
- She says she doesn't know who did it, but I don't believe her.
- He doesn't want to speak to you again.
- This doesn't taste very good, does it?
- Do you remember the first time we met?
- Do you smell something funny?
- Does he understand which way to go?

In jokes, anecdotes and film or book summaries

The present simple tense is very often used in jokes and when telling a story to make the joke or story seem more immediate. This use of the present tense is sometimes called the graphic present.

The present simple is also used to retell what happens in a book or film.

- So in he walks with a parrot on his shoulder.
- In his new film Robert Redford plays the part of a brave cowboy.

To refer to the future

The present simple is often used to refer to future events that are scheduled (and outside of our control).

- Hurry up! The train departs in 10 minutes.
- I leave Frankfurt at 5 o'clock in the morning and arrive in New York
- at midnight the next day.
- She has a piano lesson after school today.
- There's no need to hurry. The train doesn't leave for another 30 minutes.
- When does the meeting begin?