

Grammar reference

Present simple and continuous

The present simple has the following uses.

- regular events and processes
We usually **start** the week with a team meeting.
We **don't** actually **produce** the goods in the UK.

Key words

a week / month / year, always, ever, never, often, rarely, seldom, sometimes, usually

- facts that will not change
Our company **manufactures** mobile phones.
We **use** suppliers in Singapore.
- timetables and scheduled events
When **does** the plane **leave**?
The conference **starts** at 9:30 am.
- newspaper headlines
Interest rates **rise** again.
Wagner **leaves** RDS board.

The present continuous has the following uses.

- things happening now
We're **setting up** a new office in Madrid.
I'm just **looking** for your email now.

Key words

now, at the moment, currently

- temporary situations
She's **attending** a training course this week.
I'm **not travelling** in the region at the moment.
- future arrangements
Where **are** you **meeting** them on Friday?
We're **not seeing** them until next week.

The continuous is usually not used with the following stative verbs.

- verbs of emotion
appreciate, dislike, hate, like, prefer, want
- verbs of thought
believe, forget, know, mean, think, realise, recognise, remember, understand
- verbs of the senses
appear, feel, hear, see, seem, smell, taste
- verbs of ownership
have, need, own, want

Some verbs can be used with either the simple or continuous but with a change of meaning.

I **think** the design looks good. (opinion)

We're **thinking** about the design. (considering)

I **see** your point. (understanding)

I'm **seeing** him tomorrow. (meeting)

I **work** for Siemens. (permanent job)

I'm **working** for KPMG. (temporary contract)

Articles

The indefinite article has the following uses.

- non-specific singular countable nouns
I've just been given **a** company car.
There's **a** good course on management in May.
- jobs and nouns of nationality
He's **a** sales manager.
It's **a** Dutch firm but the director is **a** German.

The definite article has the following uses.

- nouns already mentioned or specified
The computer system cost ten thousand dollars.
The course I'm doing is excellent.
- nouns that are one of a kind
the world, the internet, the OECD
- groups of people
the Japanese, the unemployed, the workers
- the superlative form of adjectives
She's **the best** manager I've ever worked for.
Fear isn't **the most** effective way to motivate staff.

No article is needed with the following.

- proper names
Our headquarters are in **Hamburg**.
He works for **Apple Computer** in California.
- general plural and uncountable nouns
People are spending more and more.
It's important that **objectives** are achievable.
Business is good these days.
- certain abstract nouns
She works in **finance**.
Fear can be a good motivator.
He doesn't respond well to **criticism**.
- in certain prepositional phrases
at home, at university, at work, by train

Future forms

will + infinitive has the following uses.

- predictions
*The budget **won't be** finalised until next week.
Will the report **be** ready in time?*
- spontaneous decisions or offers
*There's no answer so I'll **try** again later.
Don't worry, I'll **make** all the arrangements.*
- things that we want to make happen
*I'll **finish** everything before I leave on holiday.
Don't worry. We'll **make** our targets this year.*

will + present perfect has the following uses.

- events completed before a future time
*The meeting **will have finished** by six o'clock.
How long **will** you **have been** here by then?*

going to + verb has the following uses.

- personal intentions
*We're **going to look** for a new business partner.
What **are** you **going to do** about it?*
- predictions
*The new product's **going to win** us market share.
It's **not going to be** easy with the dollar so low.*

will or going to?

Often either verb phrase is possible with no change in meaning.

*I think it'll **rain** later.*

*I think it's **going to rain** later.*

However, **will** usually has a more spontaneous feel, whereas **going to** suggests present evidence.

*We're late so we're **not going to hit** our deadline.*

*He's late but I'm sure he'll **be** here soon.*

The present simple has the following uses.

- timetabled events
*The plane **leaves** at 7:30 am tomorrow.*

The present continuous has the following uses.

- events arranged for a certain time
*We're **meeting** the suppliers next Monday.*

Modal verbs have the following uses.

- predictions
*We **might have to** lower our prices in future.
It **could be** a difficult strategy meeting tomorrow.*

Present perfect and past simple

The present perfect has the following uses.

- changes that affect the present
*The remuneration committee's **finished** its report.
Have the shareholders **been informed** yet?*
- situations that started in the past and continue
*CEOs **have been receiving** huge rises for years.
We've **been looking** at the issue of executive pay.*
- show duration
*I **haven't been promoted** for five years.
He's **been** the chairman since 2002.*

Key words

for (with periods of time) and *since* (with points in time: e.g. times, days, dates, etc.), *already*, *yet*, *just*, *ever*, *never*, *recently*, *lately*, *in the last*, *today*, *this week / month / year*

The past simple has the following uses.

- finished actions and events
*She **worked** here for five years. (not now)
Did you **meet** her at the conference?*
- definite or finished time periods
*I **joined** the company in 2003.
They **launched** the product two years ago.
When **did** you **go** to Dubai?*

Key words

days, *months*, *years*, *times*, *yesterday*, *ago*, *last week / month / year*

Perfect or past?

Without a time adverbial the choice of perfect or past can make news sound either very new or old.

*They've **brought out** a new product. (recently)*

*They **brought out** a new product. (some time ago)*

*They've **published** a report on CEO pay. (new)*

*They **published** a report on CEO pay. (old news)*

The perfect often introduces a topic, whereas **the past** is used for further details.

A *Has the report **been published** yet?*

B *Yes, it **has**. I **saw** it last week.*

A *What **was** in it? Anything exciting?*

B *Nothing too shocking. But it **did make** several references to the generous pay rise the board **awarded** themselves last year.*

Modal verbs

All modal verbs can show degrees of likelihood.

- certainty
The new factory **will** damage the environment.
That **must** be the best solution.
- probability
The loan **should** secure the project's future.
Tighter laws **would** protect the rainforest.
Higher oil prices **ought to** hit exports.
- possibility
We **could** ask investors for more money.
They **might** pull out if they don't get the loan.
Public demonstrations **may** make a difference.

Modal verbs also have the following uses.

- intentions
We **won't** go ahead without the loan.
We **might not** go ahead without the guarantees.
- obligation, necessity or prohibition
You **ought to** get permission first.
Companies **mustn't** be allowed to drill there.
We **have to** get a visa for visiting Lebanon now.
You **can't** smoke in restaurants in the USA.
- lack of obligation or necessity
We **don't have to** get an import licence.
You **needn't** do it now. We'll do it later.
- permission
Can we import directly into that market?
May we send you a copy of our brochure?
- advice or recommendation
You **should** visit the rainforest. It's beautiful.
We **ought to** increase our spending on PR.
- suggestions
We **should** invite the press to visit the site.
Couldn't we offer them a better discount?
Shall I give them a call?
- requests
Could you email a copy of the report?
Would you ask her to give me a call?
May I use your mobile for a moment?

Past modal verbs have the following uses.

- talk about alternative possibilities
With better research we **could have made** the product more reliable.
With better training our staff **would have coped** better with the problems that came up.
- give advice after events have happened
You **should have done** more testing.
You **ought to have understood** the market better.

- show degrees of likelihood
Smaller handsets **would have made** the phones more appealing to young people.
Launching later **might have allowed** our competitors to beat us to market.

Comparatives and superlatives

Comparatives are formed as follows.

- add -er for one-syllable adjectives
Consumers are **harder** to reach nowadays.
Many products are **cheaper** than ten years ago.
- add -ier for adjectives ending with -y
People are **busier** than ever before.
I prefer the other design. It looks **trendier**.
- use more /less for multi-syllable adjectives
Brands are **more powerful** in today's economy.
Our last product was **more expensive**.
- irregular comparative forms (good, bad, far)
We're **better** at identifying our customer now.
The figures are far **worse** than expected.
Call me if you need any **further** information.
The new office is **farther** from the city centre.

Superlatives are formed as follows.

- add the -est for one-syllable adjectives
A brand was **the simplest** stamp of quality.
The deadline was **the shortest** we've worked to.
- add the -iest for adjectives ending with -y
Building a brand is not **the easiest** thing to do.
It's **the funniest** campaign I've ever seen.
- use the most /least for multi-syllable adjectives
Many of **the most expensive** brands are copied.
It's **the least successful** campaign we've ever had.
- irregular superlative forms (good, bad)
Having **the best** features is no longer enough.
It's **the worst** slump in advertising for years.

Adverbs have the following forms.

- add more /less for comparative adverbs
TV advertising reaches people **more efficiently**.
They can do the same but far **less expensively**.
- add the most /least for superlative adverbs
Ms Klein's book made the point **most forcefully**.
It's our **most successfully** marketed product.

(not) as ... as

- all comparisons can be made in two ways
Image is **more important than** quality.
Quality **isn't as important as** image.

Conditionals

Conditional sentences are formed as follows.

- Type 1: *if* + present tense, present tense or modal
If companies **outsource**, **they reduce** costs.
If we **don't do** it, we **might lose** market share.
- Type 2: *if* + past tense, *would/could* + verb
If we **cut** jobs, the unions **would fight** the move.
Could we **save** money if we **went** offshore?
- Type 3: *if* + *had* + verb, *would/could have* + verb
If we'd **known**, we **wouldn't have done** it.
We **could have stopped** it if we'd **known** about it.

Conditional type 1 has the following uses.

- cause and effect
If you **reduce** costs, you **increase** margins.
People **work** harder if you **pay** them more.
- predict consequences of likely situations
Morale **will fall** if we **lay** people off.
We'll **lose** sales if we **don't reduce** the price.
- request action in the event of a likely situation
Call me if you **get** any more information.
Let me know if you **have** any problems.

Conditional type 2 has the following uses.

- cause and effect in the past (not true now)
If I **called** him, he **wouldn't answer** the phone.
I'd **switch** my phone off if we **were** in a meeting.
- predict consequences of unlikely situations
There **would be** a backlash if they **left** the USA.
If overheads **weren't** so high we'd **invest** more.

Conditional type 3 has the following uses.

- hypothetical situations in the past
I'd **have gone** to China if I **hadn't had** children.
If we'd **known**, we **wouldn't have done** it.
I **would have called** you if I'd **had** your number.

Some conditional sentences mix types 1 and 2.

I **wouldn't need** a translator if I'd **studied** at school.
If we'd **gone** offshore, our costs **would be** lower now.

Adjectives and adverbs

Adjectives have the following uses.

- before nouns
There was a **sharp** rise in profits last year.
We saw a **sudden** increase in trading yesterday.
- after stative verbs such as *be*, *become*, *seem*, etc.

The falling share price could be **serious**.
Investors are becoming **nervous** about the market.

Adverbs have the following uses.

- after verbs
CEO pay has risen **sharply** in the last few years.
Their accounts were audited **recently**.
- before an adjective or adverb
Bosses are getting **increasingly** lavish pay-offs.
Prices have been rising **fairly** slowly this year.

Some adverbs have irregular forms.

The scandal hit the company **hard**.
We'll have to move **fast** before the press get the story.
She arrived **late** for the meeting.
The company hasn't been doing **well** this year.

Relative pronouns

Defining relative clauses define or differentiate the person or thing they refer to. They have the following forms.

- *who*, *which* or *that*
Simon is the person **who** has most experience.
It's the interviews **that/which** take time.
- no pronoun (if the object of the verb is in the clause)
The people (**who**) we interviewed were good.
They ignored the advice (**that**) we gave them.
- *whose*
We ignored those **whose** applications were late.

Non-defining relative clauses only give extra information and do not define what they refer to. They have the following forms.

- *who*, *which*, *whom*, *that*, *whose* (within commas)
The interviews, **which** were held at the hotel, lasted exactly thirty minutes.

Gerunds and infinitives

Gerunds have the following uses.

- after prepositions
He joined us after **working** for a competitor.
I'm not interested in **buying** things on the net.
- as a noun
Registering as a seller only takes a few minutes.
The **policing** of the site is done by the users.
- after certain expressions
There's no point **bidding** now. It's been sold.