

Stative verbs

Continuous tenses can usually only be used with action verbs. Verbs can be of two kinds: action verbs and stative verbs. Stative verbs refer to mental and emotional states. Verbs indicating possession are also considered as stative verbs. Common stative verbs are: have, know, believe, imagine, want, realize, feel, doubt, think, forget, mean, love, hate, fear, like, envy etc.

I like this color. (NOT I am liking this color.)

What do you mean? (NOT What are you meaning?)

He doesn't realize what he is doing. (NOT He isn't realizing what he is doing.)

I have two children. (NOT I am having two children.)

I envy you. (NOT I am envying you.)

He always forgets to say thank you. (NOT He is always forgetting to say thank you.)

I appreciate your honesty. (NOT I am appreciating your honesty.)

Verbs of perceptions are also considered as stative verbs. Examples are: taste, hear, see, smell, feel etc.

I hear thunder. (NOT I am hearing thunder.)

The fish smells awful. (NOT The fish is smelling awful.)

Copular verbs be, seem, appear etc., are also not used in the continuous form.

She seems to be upset. (NOT She is seeming to be upset.)

There are some exceptions to this rule. The verbs think, have, see, taste, smell, feel and weigh can be used in the continuous form in some cases.

I am just tasting the soup.

I am thinking of writing a novel.

I am not feeling very well at the moment.

Why are you looking at me like that?