

Teaching the present continuous tense

If you are an ESL teacher you should know how difficult it is to teach tenses. Teaching the present continuous tense immediately after teaching the simple present tense can be confusing for students. The present continuous tense is used to talk about things that happen at the moment of speaking. The simple present tense, on the other hand, is used to talk about things that happen all the time or things that are true all the time. For example, we use the simple present tense to talk about our jobs and hobbies. Unfortunately, students sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between ongoing actions and routine activities.

While teaching the present continuous tense, it is always a good idea to start with things that are happening in the classroom at the time of speaking.

Here are some example sentences.

We are learning the present continuous tense at the moment.

Janet is making notes.

Peter is looking at the board.

I am teaching.

What are the students doing? They are learning English.

Where is Mike sitting? He is sitting on the backbench.

Who is talking to Susie? Ann is talking to Susie.

Once students become familiar with this usage, you can talk about other things that are happening at the moment.

The sun is shining.

The birds are singing.

The wind is blowing.

The children are playing in the garden.

The girls are practicing the piano.

My son is doing his homework at the moment.

Teaching questions and negatives

Teaching the present continuous tense

Frame a few sentences and ask Yes/No questions that would elicit a negative response.

Study the examples given below.

John is playing tennis.

Is John writing a letter? No, he is not writing a letter. He is playing tennis.

Alice is working on her computer at the moment.

Is Alice knitting a sweater? No, Alice is not knitting a sweater. She is working on her computer.