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Essential Grammar for Picture Description

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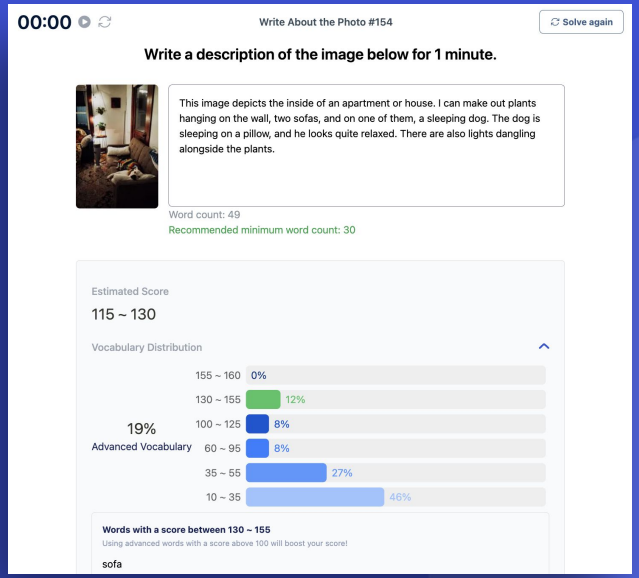

We have a full video lesson that covers this topic in-depth! Watch it here.

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2 Verb Tenses

You need 2 verb tenses for picture description:

1. Present simple
2. Present continuous

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Present simple: Formation

Formation of **to be** in the present simple:

Singular	**Plural**
I **am**	We **are**
You **are**	You **are**
He/she **is**	They **are**

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Present simple: Formation

Negation in the present simple:

Singular	Plural
I **am not**	We **are not**
You **are not**	You **are not**
He/she **is not**	They **are not**

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Present Simple: Use for picture description

The present simple can be used for:

⭐ Facts or generalizations ⭐

- *It is cold.*
- *Horses are strong.*
- *The Duolingo English Test is hard.*
- *He is happy.*

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Present Simple: Picture Description

- Cars are parked.
- Leaves are on the ground.
- It is daytime.
- The street is dirty.
- The trees are tall.
- The apartments have terraces.

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Present Simple: Picture Description

If you are **not** describing action, you should very likely use the present simple.

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Present continuous: Formation

Formation: Present simple of **to be** + the present participle

Formation of **to laugh** in the present continuous:

Singular	**Plural**
I **am laughing**	We **are laughing**
You **are laughing**	You **are laughing**
He/she **is laughing**	They **are laughing**

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Present progressive: Formation

Negation of the present continuous:

Singular	Plural
I **am not laughing**	We **are not laughing**
You **are not laughing**	You **are not laughing**
He/she **is not laughing**	They **are not laughing**

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Main use: Describing events happening right now

- *Right now, we are learning the present continuous verb tense in English.*
- *Right now, I am talking.*
- *Right now, you are listening.*
- *We are not eating lunch.*
- *We are not walking in a park.*

⭐ This is why you will use the present continuous for picture description! ⭐

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Example 1

- Three men **are playing** basketball.
- They **are jumping** to get the ball.
- The one man **is intensely grabbing** the ball.
- The other man **is standing** on the ground.

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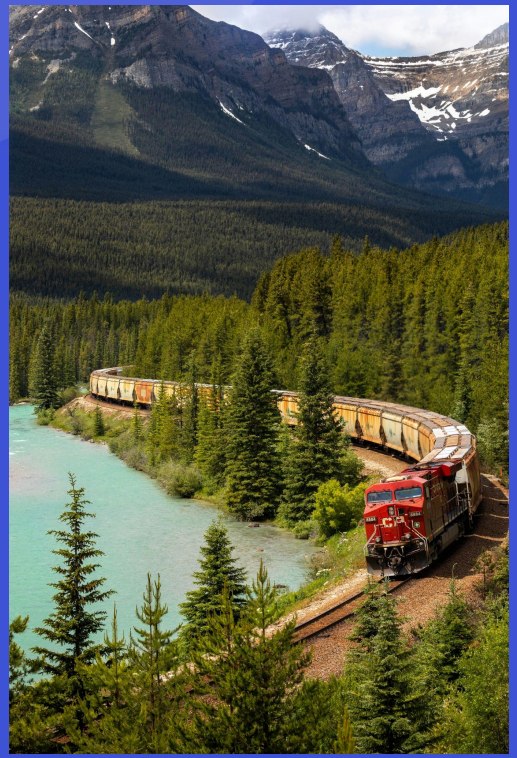
Example 2



- The train **is travelling** on the tracks.
- The train **is going** through the mountains.
- The train **is leaning** to one side.

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Recap

Use the present continous tense to describe things in action.

Use the present simple tense to describe things **not** in action.

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Example 3

Present simple

- In the background, there **are** houses.
- There **is** a green field.
- The men **are** muddy.
- The sky **is** grey.

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Example 3

Present continuous

- The men **are playing** rugby.
- One team **is wearing** green uniforms and the other team **is wearing** black uniforms.
- The teams **are fiercely pushing** against one another in a ruck.
- The referee **is standing** close by.

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Now, we have to cover some difficult things

(I’m sorry 😕)

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Continuous v. non-continuous verbs

- In English, there are verbs which cannot be used in continuous tenses.
- These verbs are called “non-continuous verbs.”
- **In general, non-continuous verbs are verbs that you cannot see being performed.**

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Non-continuous verbs

Abstract verbs

- To be
- To want
- To cost
- To seem
- To need
- To care
- To contain
- To owe
- To exist

Possession verbs

- To possess
- To own
- To belong

Emotion verbs

- To like
- To love
- To hate
- To dislike
- To fear
- To envy
- To mind

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Continuous v. non-continuous verbs: Examples

❌ She is wanting ice cream right now.

✅ She wants ice cream right now.

❌ They are needing water.

✅ They need water.

❌ He is having pain right now.

✅ He has pain right now.

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Example 4

Present simple

- The barber **has** tattoos.
  - ❌ The barber is having tattoos.
- The tattoos **are** red.
- The clippers **are** white.
- The clippers **are not** battery-powered.

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Example 4

Present continuous

- The barber **is carefully trimming** his client's hair.
- The barber **is gently holding** his client's ear.
- The client **is sitting** still.
- The client **is wearing** a black apron.

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Example 5

- There **is** a white boat.
- It **seems** a little old.
  - ❌ It is seeming a little old.
- There **is** a sailor who **is tying** the boat to the pier.
- The rope **is** yellow and blue, and he **is kneeling** down in order to tie a knot.
- He **is wearing** a blue, waterproof uniform.
- A river **is** behind him.