

- 2 Sometimes a present tense form can refer to the future.

**I'm meeting** Jo later. (Present Continuous for near future)  
 The train **leaves** at 10.00 tomorrow. (Present Simple for a timetable)  
 If you **see** Peter, say hello from me. (Present Simple in a subordinate clause)

- 3 Sometimes a past tense form can refer to the present.

*I wish I **could** help you, but I can't.*

This use of unreal tense usage is dealt with in Unit 11.

### The simple aspect

- 1 The simple aspect describes an action or fact that is seen to be permanent, often an action or event that happens repeatedly and consistently.

*The sun **rises** in the east. (= repeated)*  
*When I've read the book, I'll lend it to you. (= complete)*  
*She **has** red hair. (= permanent)*  
*He always **wore** a suit. (= a habit)*  
*It **rained** every day of our holiday. (= the whole two weeks)*

- 2 Remember the verbs that rarely use the continuous aspect. This is because they express states that are seen to be permanent.

Verbs of the mind: *know understand believe think mean*  
 Verbs of emotions: *love hate like prefer care*  
 Verbs of possession: *have own belong*  
 Certain other verbs: *cost need contain depend*

- 3 The simple aspect expresses a completed action. For this reason we must use the simple, not the continuous, if the sentence contains a number that refers to 'things done'.

*She's **written** three letters this morning.*  
*I **drink** ten cups of tea a day.*  
*He **read** five books while he was on holiday.*

Simple tenses are dealt with further in Units 2, 3, and 5.

### The continuous aspect

- 1 The continuous aspect expresses the ongoing nature of an activity. We are aware of the passing of time between the beginning and the end of the activity. The activity is not permanent.

*I'm **staying** with friends until I find a flat. (= temporary)*  
*What **are** you **doing** on your hands and knees? (= in progress)*  
*I've **been learning** English for years. (And I still am.)*  
*Don't phone at 8.00. We'll **be eating**. (= in progress)*

- 2 Because the activity is seen in progress, it can be interrupted.

*We **were walking** across a field when we were attacked by a bull.*

- 3 The activity may not be complete.

*I **was writing** a report on the flight home. (I didn't finish it.)*  
*He **was drowning**, but we saved him. (He didn't die.)*  
*Who's **been drinking** my beer? (There's some left.)*

- 4 The action of some verbs always lasts a long time, for example, *live*, and *work*. The continuous gives these actions limited duration and makes them temporary.

*Hans **is living** in London while he's **learning** English.*  
*I'm **working** as a waiter until I go to university.*

- 5 The action of some other verbs lasts a short time, for example, *lose*, *break*, *cut*, *hit*, *crash*. They are often found in the simple.

*I **lost** all my money.                      I've **crashed** your car. Sorry.*  
*She's **cut** her finger.                      He **hit** me.*

In the continuous, the action seems longer or habitual.

*I've **been cutting** the grass. (= for hours)*  
*He **was hitting** me. (= again and again)*

### Note

We cannot say a sentence such as ~~\*I've been crashing your car~~ because it suggests an activity that was done deliberately and often. Continuous tenses are dealt with further in Units 2, 3, and 5.

### The perfect aspect

The perfect aspect expresses two ideas.

- 1 The action is completed before another time.

***Have** you ever **been** to America? (= some time before now)*  
*When I arrived, Peter **had left**. (= some time before I arrived)*  
*I'll **have finished** the report by 10.00. (= some time before then)*

- 2 The exact time of the verb action is not important. The perfect aspect refers to indefinite time.

***Have** you **seen** my wallet anywhere? I've lost it. (= before now)*  
*I've **travelled** a lot. (= in my life)*

The exception to this is the Past Perfect, which can refer to definite time.

*I recognized him immediately. I **had met** him **in 1992** at university.*

Perfect tenses are dealt with further in Units 2, 3, and 5.

### Active and passive

- 1 Passive sentences move the focus of attention from the subject of an active sentence to the object.

***Shakespeare** wrote Hamlet in 1599.*  
***Hamlet** was written in 1599.*

- 2 In most cases, *by* and the agent are omitted in passive sentences. This is because the agent is not important, isn't known, or is understood.

*Kedgeree **is made** with rice and fish.*  
*This house **was built** in the 17th century.*

- 3 In informal language, we often use *you* or *they* to refer to people in general or to no person in particular. In this way we can avoid using the passive.

***You** can buy anything in Harrods.*  
***They're** building a new airport soon.*

- 4 Many past participles are used like adjectives.

*I'm very **impressed** by your work.*  
*You must be **disappointed** with your exam results.*

Passive sentences are dealt with further in Unit 3.

## Unit 2

### ➔ 2.1 Introduction to the Present Perfect

- 1 Like many languages, English has a past tense to refer to past time, and a present tense to refer to present time. But it also has the Present Perfect, which relates past actions to the present.
- 2 The use of the Past Simple roots an action in the past, with no explicit connection to the present. When we come across a verb in the Past Simple, we want to know *When?*
- 3 The use of the Present Perfect always has a link with the present. When we come across a verb in the Present Perfect, we want to know how this affects the situation now.