



When Should I Use The Present Simple Tense?

We use the present simple tense in several different situations.

1. We use the present simple when something is generally true. For example:

- The sun **rises** in the east.
- People **need** food.
- It **snows** in winter.
- The sky **isn't** green.
- Plants **die** without water.
- Two and two **make** four.

2. We need to use this tense for a situation that we think is more or less permanent. (See the **present continuous** for a temporary situation - one which we think won't last long):

- Where **do** you **live**?
- She **works** in a bank.
- They **love** coffee.
- She **has** three children.
- I **am** married.
- I **don't like** mushrooms.

3. The next use is for habits or things that we do regularly. We often use **adverbs of frequency** (such as 'often', 'always' and 'never') in this case (also see the **present continuous** for new, temporary or annoying habits):

- **Do** you **smoke**?
- I **play** tennis every Tuesday.
- We often **go** to the cinema.
- She **gets** up at seven o'clock every day.
- At the weekend, we usually **go** to the market.



- How often **do** you **study** English?
- I **don't travel** very often.

4. We use the simple present to talk about what happens in books, plays, or films:

- The hero **dies** at the end of the film.
- A young woman **travels** through Europe, where she **meets** different people, and finally **falls** in love.
- In this book, an army **invades** Britain.
- The main character **is** very pretty and **works** in a bookshop.

5. We use the present simple in the first and the zero conditionals:

- If it **rains**, we won't come.
- If you **heat** water to 100 degrees, it **boils**.

6. Strangely, we can use this tense to talk about the future. When you are discussing a timetable or a fixed plan, you can use this tense. Usually, the timetable is fixed by an organisation, not by us:

- School **begins** at nine tomorrow.
- Our train **leaves** at eleven.
- What time **does** the film **start**?
- The plane **doesn't arrive** at seven, it arrives at seven thirty.
- When **does** the class **finish**?

7. We also use the present simple to talk about the future after words like 'when', 'until', 'after', 'before' and 'as soon as' in a future sentence:

- I will call you when I **have** time. (Not: '~~will have~~')
- I won't go out until it **stops** raining.
- She'll come as soon as her babysitter **arrives**.
- I'm going to make dinner after I **watch** the news.



- I'll give you the book before you **go**.

8. We often need to use this tense with stative verbs (verbs which we don't use in continuous tenses), in situations where we'd usually use the present continuous:

- This soup **tastes** great.
- You **look** fabulous.
- I think she **is** very pretty.
- I **am** cold.
- I **promise** I will help you.