

PRESENT SIMPLE



EXPLANATIONS

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Present simple forms: 'be'

The verb 'be' is different from all the other verbs in the present simple tense.

Here's the positive form. 'Positive' means a normal sentence, not a negative or a question. This is sometimes called 'affirmative'.

- I am cold.
- You are French.
- He is in the kitchen.
- She is hungry.
- It is Wednesday.
- We are late.
- They are on the train.

Next, here's the negative. It's very easy. You add 'not'.

- I am not German.
- You are not on the phone.
- He is not late.
- She is not thirsty.
- It is not warm.
- We are not at home.
- They are not children.

Finally, let's talk about the question form of the present simple with 'be'. We make questions by putting the verb first, then putting the subject. This is called 'inversion'.

Here's the 'yes / no' question form.

- Am I late?
- Are you Italian?
- Is he at work?
- Is she hungry?
- Is it cold outside?
- Are we in the right place?

- Are they in the garden?

If you'd like to make a 'wh' question, you just put the question word (or phrase, like 'how long') at the front.

- Where am I?
- How are you?
- Why is he here?
- Who is she?
- What is it?
- When are we at home?
- How long are they in London?

Present simple forms: all verbs except 'be'

With all verbs that are not 'be', we make the present simple in the same way.

The positive form is really easy. It's just the verb (sometimes called the infinitive, or the bare infinitive or the infinitive without 'to'), and we add an extra 's' if the subject is 'he', 'she', or 'it'.

- I play tennis.
- You live in London.
- He likes chocolate.
- She hates mushrooms.
- It rains often.
- We travel a lot.
- They want a drink.

Don't forget the 's'! Even really advanced students do this.

To make the negative form, you need to use 'do not' or 'does not' + the infinitive. We use 'do' + I / you / we / they and 'does' + he / she / it. The 's' for he / she / it is now on 'does' so we don't need it on the main verb.

- I do not play tennis.
- You do not live in London.
- He does not like chocolate.
- She does not hate mushrooms.
- It does not rain often.
- We do not travel a lot.
- They do not want a drink.

We use 'do' or 'does' before the subject to make 'yes / no' questions.

- Do I play tennis?
- Do you live in London?
- Does he like chocolate?
- Does she hate mushrooms?
- Does it rain often?

- Do we travel a lot?
- Do they want a drink?

To make a 'wh' question, you just put the question word at the front.

- When do I play tennis?
- Where do you live in London?
- Why does he like chocolate?
- Why does she hate mushrooms?
- How often does it rain?
- How do we travel a lot?
- When do they want a drink?

Present simple spelling changes

Some verbs have spelling changes with 'he', 'she' or 'it' in the present simple.

- I / you / we / they have – he / she / it has
- I / you / we / they do – he / she / it does
- I / you / we / they go – he / she / it goes

Verbs that end in 'consonant + y' usually change 'y' to 'ie' before 's'.

- I / you / we / they study – he / she / it studies
- I / you / we / they try – he / she / it tries
- I / you / we / they fly – he / she / it flies
- I / you / we / they cry – he / she / it cries

However, verbs that end in 'vowel + y' don't usually change to 'ie'

- I / you / we / they play – he / she / it plays
- I / you / we / they say – he / she / it says
- I / you / we / they buy – he / she / it buys
- I / you / we / they enjoy – he / she / it enjoys
- I / you / we / they stay – he / she / it stays

Verbs that end in 's', 'sh', 'ch' or 'x' often add 'e' before 's'.

- I / you / we / they pass – he / she / it passes
- I / you / we / they wash – he / she / it washes
- I / you / we / they teach – he / she / it teaches

Present simple short forms

When we're speaking, and often when we're writing, we use short forms (or 'contractions') with the present simple. This means that instead of saying 'I am', we say 'I'm'.

Here are the short forms for the present simple positive with 'be'.

- I am → I'm
- You are → You're
- He is → He's
- She is → She's
- It is → It's
- We are → We're
- They are → They're

Here are the short forms for the present simple negative with 'be'. This time there are two possibilities (except for 'I am not', which only has one). We usually use the first one, but the other one is still correct.

- I am not → I'm not
- You are not → You aren't / You're not
- He is not → He isn't / He's not
- She is not → She isn't / she's not
- It is not → It isn't / it's not
- We are not → We aren't / We're not
- They are not → They aren't / They're not

Here are the short forms for the present simple negative with other verbs. The 'do not' becomes 'don't' and the 'does not' becomes 'doesn't'.

- I do not want → I don't want
- You do not want → You don't want
- He does not want → He doesn't want
- She does not want → She doesn't want
- It does not want → It doesn't want

- We do not want → We don't want
- They do not want → They don't want

Present simple short answers

When we answer a 'yes / no' question that's in the present simple, we can answer in different ways.

- A: Are you from London?
 - B1: Yes. (We can just say 'yes'.)
 - B2: Yes, I am. (This is called a 'short answer'.)
 - B3: Yes, I'm from London. (This is a long answer and is the same as a normal sentence.)
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- A: Are you from London?
 - B1: No. (We can just say 'no'.)
 - B2: No, I'm not. (This is called a 'short answer'.)
 - B3: No, I'm not from London. (This is a long answer and is the same as a normal sentence.)

Let's practise how to make short answers.

Short answers for 'yes / no' questions in the present simple with 'be'.

- A: Are you hungry? / Is she hungry? / Are they hungry? Etc.
- B: Yes, I am.
- B: Yes, you are.
- B: Yes, he is.
- B: Yes, she is.
- B: Yes, it is.
- B: Yes, we are.
- B: Yes, they are.

We CAN'T use a short form here when we're saying 'yes'. We can't say '~~yes, I'm~~'.

If you want to say 'no', the short answers are like this.

- B: No, I am not / I'm not.
- B: No, you are not / you aren't / you're not.
- B: No, he is not / he isn't / he's not.
- B: No, she is not / she isn't / she's not.

- B: No, it is not / it isn't / it's not.
- B: No, we are not / we aren't / we're not.
- B: No, they are not / they aren't / they're not.

Short answers for 'yes / no' questions in the present simple with other verbs.

When the verb in the question isn't 'be', we use do / don't / does / doesn't to make the short answers.

- A: Do you live in London? / Does she live in London? Do they live in London? Etc.
- B: Yes, I do.
- B: Yes, you do.
- B: Yes, he does.
- B: Yes, she does.
- B: Yes, it does.
- B: Yes, we do.
- B: Yes, they do.

For the negative, we can use 'do not / does not' or 'don't / doesn't'

- B: No, I do not / I don't.
- B: No, you do not / you don't.
- B: No, he does not / he doesn't.
- B: No, she does not / she doesn't.
- B: No, it does not / it doesn't.
- B: No, we do not / we don't.
- B: No, they do not / they don't.

In all these cases, it's normal to use a short form.

Present simple uses: for the present

1: We use the present simple to talk about general facts and things that are always true.

- People need food.
- Two and two make four.
- London is the capital of the UK.

This also includes permanent situations in people's lives, like where they live.

- He lives in Madrid.
- She works as a teacher.

2: We use the present simple to talk about habits in the present.

We often use adverbs of frequency, such as 'often', 'always' and 'sometimes', in this case, as well as expressions like 'every Sunday' or 'twice a month'.

- Do you smoke?
- I play tennis every Tuesday.
- I don't travel very often.

3: We can use the present simple to give instructions.

- A: Where is the train station, please?
- B: You walk up this road, then you turn right.

- A: How do I use this coffee machine?
- B: First, you choose your coffee, then you press this button. You don't touch the screen. Finally, you put your money in.