

31 Present tenses

A Sample sentences

The logistics department dispatches finished goods to our customers and receives raw materials from our suppliers. Delivery documentation is enclosed with the consignment, but the shipping papers aren't prepared in this department. In this area here the goods are loaded onto trucks; and over there incoming goods which have just arrived are unloaded. A consignment is just being delivered over there. We have been using plastic packaging for many years; however, next year we are moving to more environmentally-friendly materials.

B Form

Present simple and Present continuous

	Positive	Negative	Question
<i>Present simple active</i>	We <i>receive</i> raw materials from our suppliers.	The supervisor <i>doesn't prepare</i> the papers.	Where <i>do you store</i> finished goods?
<i>Present simple passive</i>	All goods <i>are received</i> at this depot.	The bill of lading <i>isn't dispatched</i> .	Where <i>are the goods stored</i> ?
<i>Present continuous active</i>	The supervisor <i>is checking</i> the delivery.	I <i>am not sending</i> out a bill of lading with this shipment.	When <i>are we moving</i> to the new depot?
<i>Present continuous passive</i>	Goods <i>are being unloaded</i> over there.	At present the pallets <i>are not being reused</i> .	Why <i>are those crates being moved</i> ?

Present perfect

	Positive	Negative	Question
<i>Present perfect simple active</i>	Our contractor <i>has built</i> a supporting wall.	They <i>have not drained</i> the water yet.	How many tunnels <i>have they dug</i> ?
<i>Present perfect simple passive</i>	The walls <i>have been built</i> .	The water <i>has not been drained</i> .	<i>Has the cable been laid</i> ?
<i>Present perfect continuous active</i>	The supervisor <i>has been checking</i> the walls today.	I <i>have not been working</i> on that site since last year.	How long <i>have they been excavating</i> at the site?

Note: the *present perfect continuous passive* is very rare

C Uses

The *present tenses* are used to express a range of meanings.

The *present continuous* describes:

- 1 an activity at or around the time of speaking
At present we are using plastic packaging.
- 2 a fixed future plan
Next year we are building a new depot.

The *present simple* describes:

a regular or characteristic happening
How often do you receive shipments?

The *present perfect* describes:

- 1 an activity at a non-specific time in the past
Our contractor has built a new supporting wall.
- 2 an activity which started in the past and continues to the present
We have been working on this project since last year.

TASKS

1 Choose the correct verb form in each of the following.

- In this process, the mixture **is heated/is heating** to 120°C.
- Once the salts **are dissolving/have dissolved**, the heat is reduced.
- Several people **have survived/are surviving** the earthquake and **are treating/are being treated** in hospital at the moment.
- For security purposes the employees **change/are changing** their passwords regularly.
- Up until now people in this area **have taken/take** waste plastic to recycling centres, but at present we **have tried/are trying** a curbside collection system.

2 A journalist is asking some questions. Complete the answers by putting the verb in brackets into the appropriate present tense in the active or passive.

- A: Do you normally hold these products in stock?
B: No. They are normally made to order. (make)
- A: Is the chief engineer here at the moment?
B: I'm afraid not. He _____ currently _____ the plant in the north of Scotland. (inspect)
- A: Can I see the new design?
B: Yes, of course. It _____ just _____ off the production line. (come)
- A: How many units do you produce a month?
B: We _____ 5,000 units a month and only a very small number _____. (produce) (reject)
- A: How long have you been using imported raw materials?
B: We _____ (import) rayon for many years but we _____ only just _____ (begin) using imported polyester.
- A: Is this the natural colour of the fabric?
B: No, this fabric _____ (dye).
- A: And how long will it be kept in store?
B: Not long at all. We _____ (dispatch) this load tomorrow afternoon.

3 Complete the following text with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

Over the past ten years, this area (a) _____ (experience) severe flooding. Houses (b) _____ (damage) and roads (c) _____ (destroy). The local authority (d) _____ (decide) to introduce a flood control system. At present our workforce (e) _____ (build) a dam on the west side of the town and dikes along the river bank (f) _____ (heighten). We must complete the work within two months, so at present we (g) _____ (work) 24 hours a day. We (h) _____ (believe) that these measures will solve the problem in the short term but on 1st May we (i) _____ (start) work on a new watercourse. The plans (j) _____ already _____ (draw up) and we (k) _____ (be) ready to start next week.