

# Tenses

## Simple vs Continuous

In English all tenses have a continuous so we can compare the two forms: **Simple – Continuous**.

The basic idea is that the **Simple** indicates a “**short**” action or “**shorter**” compared to the continuous that indicates a “**long**” action, or “**longer**” than the **Simple**.

The **Continuous** indicates a “**long**” or “**repeated**” action; there are 3 rules.

- 1) **Two actions: normally 1 long and 1 short; but also 2 long or 2 short.**
- 2) **With time: the action begins before, finishes after.**
- 3) **1 period, 1 action; the action “fills” the period**

All **continuous** tenses can use all three rules except:

**Present Continuous** – can only be used with **Rule 2**, the time is “now”.

**Future Perfect Continuous** – can only be used with **Rule 3**, the period is given with the tense.

Examples:

- **While I am working tomorrow, call the doctor**  
*(Two Futures rule and Imperative=Future)*
- **I was working yesterday and my friend was reading a book**
- **John coughed; Mary sneezed**
- **I saw an eclipse when I was staying in London**
  
- **This time last year I was living in Rome**
- **At 2pm we will be having lunch**
- **The wind is blowing** *(now)*
- **When I arrived he was sleeping**
  
- **I will be working all tomorrow morning**
- **They had been living in France for 12 years before they came here**
- **I have been studying for 2 hours**
- **She has been waiting since 9am**

**She has been wearing the same dress for 3 years**

*(not a continuous “24h” action, but repeated regularly over time; we do not know how many times and the individual durations)*

**When he wakes up he will have been sleeping for a long time**

*(a continuous action; no time given but the indication is more than normal for the time – night, morning)*

**I live here**

*(Present Tense; here indicating “habit”, I normally live here, it is my home, I consider it a permanent condition)*

**I am living here**

*(Rule 2 – Now – temporary, this is not my “normal” home: should I continue to live here, and my idea about permanence changes, I can then say “I live here”)*

## **It has rained**

*(Present Perfect; from when it was not raining to now – or just finished – there was rain – probably not too much)*

## **It has been raining**

*(Present Perfect Continuous; from when it was not raining to now – or just finished – there was rain – probably a lot, could be continuous or a shorter storm, but enough to leave strong visible signs, puddles)*

## **Tomorrow I will work**

*(Future; indicating that the “work” tomorrow is, probably, normal and not filling all the day)*

## **Tomorrow I will be working**

*(Future Continuous; indicating that the “work” tomorrow is, probably, normal and could fill all the day, or, at least, is considered to be “long”)*