



OET Medical writing. Grammar correction.

Today's reference is regarding the use of the continuous tense, mainly by students from India. I can refer to this as I have visited the country several times in my life and have found this grammar to be in use in 'everyday life,' This is not to say that other nationalities do not make the same error, it is, from my observations more prevalent in Indian English.

Let's look at some examples of the erroneous use of the present continuous tense. (Incorrect/correct)

"I am having a cold." (A cold is an illness/medical condition). I have a cold.

"I am understanding it". (stative verb) I understand it.

"They are loving each other." (stative verb) They love each other.

"Where are you coming from?" (has meaning both 'now' and country of origin). "Where do you come from?" "England"

"Where are you coming from?" "I have just left work."

"That is relieving" That is a relief. (relieving is a feeling/relief is the knowledge of/learning about something).

"You are fully understanding?" (Stative verb) "Do you fully understand?"

I will add to this list as I hear more things which need correction.

(Most of these expressions come from OET videos on You Tube. Be careful when using them. Some of the English the teacher uses is not correct). Thanks.



We use the present continuous in several ways.

1. To say that an action is in progress/happening as we speak (now)
2. To say that an action happens over a period of time , even if it is not happening all the time.
3. As a substitute for the future tense (going to).
4. Something that is happening in the present, but not at the moment of speaking.
5. With 'non-stative' verbs. (See list of verbs which are stative verbs).



Example 1 of 5. (Happening now)

“I am **having** breakfast **at the moment**.” (we often use a ‘time stamp’ to show that the action is happening as we speak. Examples: **as we speak/at the moment/right now/currently**).

“**My parents are relaxing** in the garden, **enjoying** the weather.”

(We can also join verbs for more than 1 action. We do not need ‘and’ for the 2nd action).

“**My brother is driving** to London for the weekend.”

(He is somewhere between the start and the end of his journey).

Medical examples:

Mr Johnson **is** currently in theatre **having** an operation.

The patient **is having** an allergic reaction to the medication.

The patients **are relocating** to another ward.

You are a doctor who **is attending** a patient who has fallen at home.

These actions are ‘happening as we speak’



Examples 2 of 5.

I am learning to play the piano. (This action is not happening all the time, but is an ongoing action).

They are living in London. (They live in the city, but sometimes they leave the city for vacations, see family and friends, etc...,)

I am having difficulties understanding the material in this course. (This only happens when I am studying/looking at the material).

She is studying at De Montfort University. (she studies during the day but not at other times).

Medical sentences.

He **is having** physiotherapy for his dislocated shoulder.

The patient's temper **is increasing** daily.

Mr. Johnson **is taking** antibiotics for his viral condition.

They **are waiting** for their daughter to be called to hospital.



Examples 3 of 5.

I **am starting** a new job next week. (We add a time 'tag' to indicate the future – 'next week').

They **are going** to The Maldives for their annual vacation. (The 'next time' they go on vacation).

We **are having** a baby. (The woman is pregnant and the baby will be born in the future).

She **is starting** university next autumn/fall. (She is going to attend university in the future autumn/fall).

Medical sentences.

The patient **is having** a course of chemotherapy next week.

Mr. Johnson **is undergoing** surgery next month.

They **are being** discharged in the morning.

We **are removing** the clips after your surgery.

This is what is known as 'Present Continuous for the future' Tense. It is in some grammar books, but not all. It is used more commonly than the future simple tense.

Eg: What are you doing tomorrow? (future – 'going to' What are you going to do tomorrow?) The 1st sentence form is 'natural' to native speakers.



Example 4 of 5.

I **am learning** Spanish. (but not as we are speaking).

We **are waiting** for the weather to change so we can go hiking. (we don't spend all the time waiting for this to happen).

They **are preparing** for their wedding. (not at the time of speaking).

She **is travelling** to college by bus. (This could be happening now but I don't know).

Medical sentences.

We are supplying the hospital with equipment.

There are several people who are working the night shifts.

The patients are looking for ways to protect themselves from disease.



Example 5 of 5.

Example 5 covers the non-stative verbs.

Non-stative verbs are verbs which can be used in the continuous form. The differences are that one is a **'state'** the other is an **'action'**

A state is where something happens/exists naturally (no action)

Eg: The 'smell' of something is 'natural' or 'exists' and is not an action.

Actions are where something or somebody is doing an action.

Eg: 'Smelling' the soup is an 'action' done by 'someone'

There are some verbs which can be used as both.

Have – (I have a headache - **state**) (I am having a good time - **action**)

Be – (He is at school - **state**) - (They are being selfish - **action**)

Smell (The soup smells great - **state**) (He is smelling the soup to check the taste - **action**)

Taste (The food tastes great - **state**) (I am tasting the food to see if I like it - **action**)

Hear (I hear that it is cold outside - **state**) (I am (just) hearing the news about him – **action**).

Speak (I speak to my wife at work everyday – repeated **action**) (I am speaking on the phone – **action** now).

These are more complicated, so there are charts which you can download from the site.

Go to www.oetmedical.co.uk/grammar/