

State verbs and action verbs

In English, there are basically two kinds of verbs – action verbs and state verbs.

As the name itself suggests, action verbs indicate an action of some kind. Examples are: throw, catch, play, come, work, sing, dance, write, cook and break.

State verbs refer to a state. Examples are: *have, be, believe, know, love, hate, dislike, like* etc. While have and be show possession and existence, other state verbs describe ideas connected to our minds and thoughts.

State verbs are not normally used in the continuous form. For example, we don't normally say: *I am loving you.*

We say: *I love you.* (You either love people or you don't.)

Love is a state verb and it doesn't usually have a continuous form. Note that the participle loving can be used as an adjective. Example: *loving parents*

Continuous forms are usually used to describe temporary actions and situations that are going on at the moment of speaking. State verbs, on the other hand, refer to more permanent situations and that probably explains why they are not used in continuous forms.

I know Jane. (NOT I am knowing Jane. You either know people or you don't.)

Some state verbs also have an action meaning. A good example is the verb 'think'. When think refers to the act of thinking, it can have a continuous form.

What are you thinking about?

I am thinking about writing a novel.

But when think means 'have an opinion', it does not have a continuous form.

What do you think of the weather in our country? (NOT What are you thinking of the weather in our country?)