

Using see

See is one of those verbs that are not normally used in the progressive form. To talk about something that you see at the moment of speaking, you can use the expression can see.

I can see a ship. (NOT I am seeing a ship.)

In American English *I see a ship* is also possible.

Can you see an airplane? (NOT Are you seeing an airplane?)

See can be used in the progressive form if we mean that somebody is imagining things that are not there.

'Look! There is a dark figure behind the window!' 'You're seeing things. I can't see anything there.'

Continuous forms are not used when see means understand.

'I don't want to continue like this.' 'I see.'

See can also mean 'have heard'

I see they are going to lay off people. (= I have heard that they are going to lay off people.)

In expressions like I'll see and let me see, see is used to mean 'consider' or 'think'.

Note that if there is an object, a preposition is necessary after these expressions.

We will see about that proposal tomorrow. (NOT We will see that proposal tomorrow.)

See can mean find out, after if/whether.

Can you go around and see whether she is at home?

I looked out of the window to see if it was still raining.

See if... can mean 'try to'.

See if you can get him to stop talking about his problems.

When see means 'meet', 'go out with' or 'talk to', progressive forms are possible.

I'm seeing your Dad tomorrow. (= I'm meeting your Dad tomorrow.)

I have heard that he is seeing a French woman.