

**APSU Writing Center**  
The Progressive Tense

**The Progressive Tense**

- Refers to actions that are ongoing or continuous at the time being discussed.
- Use a progressive form of the verb (-ing) when an action is in progress at a particular moment.

**Present Progressive**

- Describes what is happening right now.
- **Form:** **am, are, or is** and a verb ending in -ing.
  - **Example:** I am smiling
  - **Example:** They are smiling.

**Past Progressive**

- Describes an action that was in progress at a specific moment in the past.
- **Form:** **was or were** and a verb ending in -ing.
  - **Example:** He was smiling.
  - **Example:** They were smiling.

**Future Progressive**

- Describes an action that will be in progress at a future moment.
- **Form:** **will be** and a verb ending in -ing.
  - **Example:** They will be smiling.

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**Common Mistakes**

**Using Simple Present Instead of Present Progressive**

- Use the present progressive when something is happening right now.
  - **Error:** I can't talk to you right now. I study for my exams.
  - **Correction:** I can't talk to you right now. I am studying for my exams.

**Using Progressive Tense with Steady-State Verbs**

- Steady-state verbs express conditions, not actions. These verbs describe states that do not change moment to moment, so they cannot be used in the progressive tense.
  - **Error:** Juan is belonging to the student union.
  - **Correction:** Juan belongs to the student union.

**Categories of steady-state verbs:**

- Mental Activity
  - **Examples:** believe, doubt, forget, imagine, know, mean
- Emotional Condition
  - **Examples:** appreciate, care, dislike, envy, fear, hate, like, love, need, prefer, want
- Possession
  - **Examples:** belong, consist of, contain, own, possess



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Reference

Ruszkiewicz, J., & Dolmage, J. (2015). *A commonsense guide to grammar and usage* (5th ed.).  
Bedford/St. Martin's.