

Coffee Break **English**

Season 1, Lesson 1



CoffeeBreak
English

Lesson notes

In this episode, we listen to Catriona describing her holiday in Italy. We hear all about what she is doing, and we focus on the difference between the **present simple** and the **present continuous** tenses.

Text

This week I'm on holiday with my family in Italy. I'm with my husband, our son, my sister, and her three children. We are staying in a small house in the countryside, on the Amalfi Coast. We live in Manchester, which is a busy city in the UK, so it's very quiet for us here! The weather is beautiful; today the sun is shining and it's very hot. In Manchester it isn't usually warm, it's usually rainy and cloudy. The children are enjoying the sun because they love playing outside and swimming in the pool. Back home, we often go swimming in the local pool, but we never swim outside - it's too cold!

At the moment, we are having breakfast in the garden. The adults are drinking coffee and the children are drinking fresh orange juice, and we're all eating some chocolate pastries. At home we hardly ever have pastries for breakfast; we normally have cereal and toast.

We are enjoying the cool morning weather, and planning what to do today. This morning we are going to the beach, and then later we're having lunch in a little pizza restaurant. The food here is delicious, especially the ice cream. In the UK we rarely have ice cream, but at the moment we're buying it every day. Oh well, we're on holiday!

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Let's look at the language used in the text.

The present continuous

When she speaks to us, Catriona is on holiday. When we describe an action which is in progress at the moment that we are speaking, we use the **present continuous** tense. The structure is **subject + be + verb+ing**. For example:

we are staying

the sun is shining

I am walking

Here is the **present continuous tense** in its affirmative and negative forms:

subject	be (+)	be (-)	verb+ing
I	am / 'm	am not / 'm not	staying
you	are / 're	are not / aren't	
he / she / it	is / 's	is not / isn't	
we	are / 're	are not / aren't	
they	are / 're	are not / aren't	

To make a question, the subject and **be** change places, just like in a normal **be** question:

be (+)	subject	verb+ing	short answers
am	I	staying?	yes, I am no, I'm not
are	you	staying?	yes, you are no, you're not
is	he / she / it	staying?	yes, he / she / it is no, he / she / it isn't
are	we	staying?	yes, we are no, we aren't
are	they	staying?	yes, they are no, they aren't

We can also use **question words** to make open questions:

Where are you staying?

When is he staying?

Why are they staying?

Phrases in the present continuous usually have a time word or phrase which tells us that the action is in progress, like **right now, at the moment, today, this week, this month.**

For example:

at the moment, we are having breakfast

this week, I am walking to work

it's raining right now

The present continuous for future plans

We can also use the present continuous to describe things in the future that we are sure will happen, like **plans** and **arrangements**. We usually use a future time word or phrase, like **tomorrow**, **next week**, **this evening**, **this summer**. For example:

this evening I am watching a film with my family

this summer we are going on holiday

next week he is starting a new job

The present simple with adverbs of frequency

Catriona tells us how her holiday in Italy is different from her life in the UK. She uses the **present simple** to describe things which are usually or always true in her daily life, like **habits** and **routines**. She uses time words or phrases to show this, called **adverbs of frequency**. They tell us the frequency with which an action happens, or how often it happens. Here are some common adverbs of frequency, from not frequent to most frequent:

never, hardly ever, rarely sometimes, often, usually, always

Here are some examples of **adverbs of frequency** from the text:

in Manchester, it isn't usually warm

we often go swimming in the local pool

I always get up at 7am

Present simple or present continuous?

We use the **present simple** for habits and routines, and we use the **present continuous** for actions in progress, or temporary actions. For example:

I always start work at 9am. At the moment I am walking to the office.

I usually live alone, but this week I'm staying with my brother because I'm looking for a new flat.

We don't use **be** in the **present continuous**, just the **present simple**. For example:

the weather is beautiful

it's very hot

oh well, we're on holiday!