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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Grammar

### Present tenses



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*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Catherine**

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Catherine.

**Finn**

And me, Finn. Hello.

**Catherine**

In this programme we're talking about present tenses.

**Finn**

Now let's get started. The first thing we need to know is that the present simple tense is mainly for facts, habits and truths. Now, Catherine, give me a true fact about you.

**Catherine**

A true fact about me is that I like gardening.

**Finn**

Oh, wow, great.

**Catherine**

Love it.

**Finn**

Thanks Catherine. And can you tell me one of your habits?

**Catherine**

I drink a cup of coffee every morning. I drink one at home and I drink another one when I get to work.

**Finn**

So far so good. We make the present simple with a subject and base verb, and we add **-s** to the verb for **he**, **she** and **it**. So: I work, you work, he works, she works, and so on. We make questions and negatives with **do** or **does**. So Catherine, do you take milk in your coffee?

**Catherine**

I do take milk in my coffee, Finn. Do you take milk in your coffee?

**Finn**

I don't. I like it black.

**Catherine**

And what about Mrs Finn, does she take milk in her coffee?

**Finn**

She doesn't drink coffee.

**Catherine**

Oh, what does she drink?

**Finn**

Tea. All the time.

**Catherine**

Very British.

**Finn**

Yes.

**Catherine**

Good. So that's present simple for facts and habits. Now when we're talking about activities, temporary situations, and things that are happening now – or around now – we use **am, is** or **are** plus an **i-n-g verb** to make the present continuous. So Finn, what are you doing now?

**Finn**

Now, right now, right at this minute, I'm sitting in the studio, on a chair, talking to you, but off and on, I'm also reading a novel called *The Unconsoled* by Kazuo Ishiguro. It's great.

**Catherine**

Well pronounced.

**Finn**

Thank you. And are you reading anything right now Catherine?

**Catherine**

Yes I am. I'm reading a novel also. It's a comedy about *Adrian Mole* and it's really good, I'm enjoying it a lot.

**Finn**

Sounds great. I'd like to borrow it.

**Catherine**

You can. We can also use the present continuous for future arrangements. So Finn, what are you doing tonight?

**Finn**

Tonight I'm taking my wife to dinner. Don't tell her.

**Catherine**

Lucky wife.

**Finn**

That's right. So, present simple for facts and habits; present continuous for activities and future arrangements.

**Catherine**

And now for the present perfect. We make it with **have** or **has** plus the past participle, it connects the past to the present, and it's useful for asking about life experiences. So, life experience question coming, Finn. Have you ever eaten insects?

**Finn**

I have, yes. I've eaten ants and beetles in Cambodia. So in the question, the word **ever** means 'at any time in your life'. **Never** means at no time in your life. So Catherine, tell us about an experience that you have **never** had.

**Catherine**

Well, I've never eaten insects Finn. And I've never been on safari. But I'm sure that our colleague Rob has been on safari.

**Finn**

He's been to many places.

**Catherine**

He has. Other words we use with present perfect are **just**, **already** and **yet**. We use **just**, **already** and **yet** a lot when we're using the present perfect tense to talk about the present effect of a past event. **Already** means something has happened, perhaps earlier than expected. So Finn, give us an example of **already**:

**Finn**

Right. I've **already** had breakfast today.

**Catherine**

And coffee? Have you had coffee?

**Finn**

I've **just** had a cup of coffee. **Just** means recently. I haven't had lunch **yet**.

**Catherine**

I should think not, it's only half ten.

**Finn**

It's a bit early for lunch, yeah.

**Catherine**

And **yet** means something like 'not until now'.

**Finn**

Good. And if a past situation has continued until now, use **for** or **since** to say how long it has continued, like this:

**Catherine**

I've lived in London **for** five years. I've been married **since** 2003.

**Finn**

We also use the present perfect to give news. Things that happened a short time ago, and are important now. So, have you got any news for us, Catherine?

**Catherine**

Yes I have, actually.

**Finn**

OK?

**Catherine**

I've won the lottery!

**Finn**

I don't believe you.

**Catherine**

That's because I'm not telling the truth, it's just an example!

**IDENT**

You're listening to [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com).

**Catherine**

And we're talking about present tenses. And it's quiz time! Question one. Which of these sentences best describes a habit? a) I have smoked 20 cigarettes a day, b) I smoke 20 cigarettes a day.

**Finn**

And the answer's b) I smoke 20 cigarettes a day. Question two. Is this sentence grammatically correct, or wrong? Humans have not visited the planet Mars yet, but they have already been to the moon.

**Catherine**

It's correct.

**Finn**

It is. Now, last one: Which sentence is correct? a) Catherine has never eaten insects, b) Catherine never eats insects, or c) Catherine is never eating insects.

**Catherine**

And the answer is that both a) and b) are correct. As a life experience it's true to say that I have never eaten insects; and as a fact I can say: I never eat insects. So that brings us to the end of the quiz, and well done to you if you got them all right.

**Finn**

A free insect for everyone who got all of those right! Now, there's more about this on our website at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again for more 6 Minute Grammar.

**Both**

Bye.