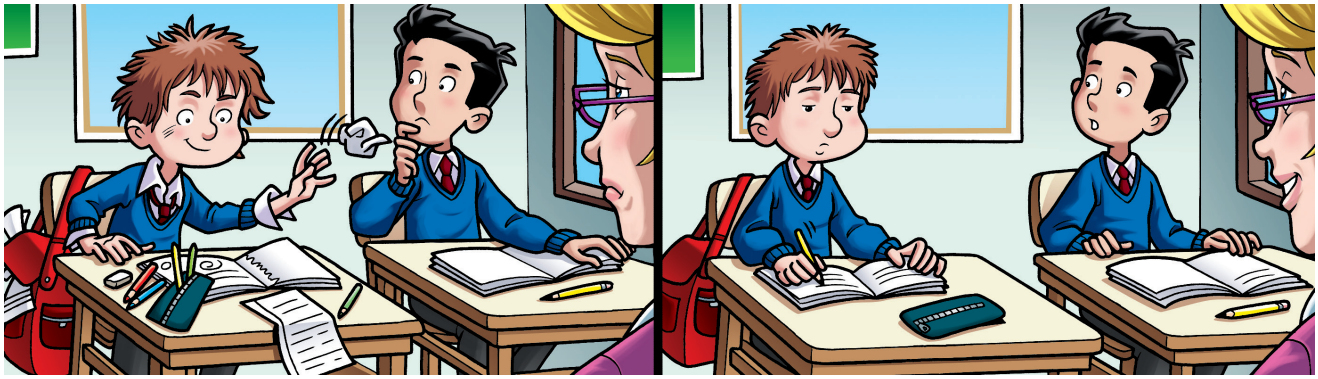
Intermediate Unit 1a(2)

Dynamic and stative verbs



Normally, he isn't well behaved.

But today he's being very well behaved.

Presentation

There are two types of main verbs: *dynamic* and *stative*.

Dynamic verbs

You use dynamic verbs to talk about actions or events. You can use them to talk about facts/routines and actions that are in progress:

*I **talk** to my students individually once a term.* (= routine)

*Sorry, I'**m talking** to a student right now. Can we talk later?* (= action in progress)

Stative verbs

You use ***stative verbs*** to talk about states. These include talking about existence *(be, exist),* beliefs and opinions *(know, think, understand)* and possession *(have got, belong)*:

*I'**m** from England.* (= existence)

*I **know** what you mean.* (= belief)

*I'**ve got** one brother and two sisters.* (= possession)

Some stative verbs are only used in the present simple and *not* in the present continuous:

*Ask me. I **know** the answer!* (don't say *Ask me. I'~~m knowing~~ the answer!*)

*Speak more slowly. I **don't understand** English very well.* (don't say *Speak more slowly. I'~~m not understanding~~ English very well.*)

*You **seem distracted** today.* (don't say *You'~~re seeming~~ distracted today.)*

*This house **belongs** to my grandmother.* (don't say *This house ~~is belonging~~ to my grandmother.*)

*I **don't believe** you!* (don't say *I'~~m not believing~~ you!*)

*I'm sorry but I **don't agree** with you.* (don't say *I'm sorry but I'~~m not agreeing~~ with you.*)

You can use some stative verbs in both the present simple and the present continuous:

- in the present simple the verb describes a general state or situation:

  *Normally, he **isn't** well behaved.* (= generally true)

  *What **do you think** about the situation?* (= general opinion)

- in the present continuous the verb describes a temporary state or new situation:

  *He**'s being** very well behaved today.* (= temporary situation)

  *I'm not sure. I'**m thinking** about it.* (= in progress)

Changes in meaning

The meaning of some verbs can change because they can be both stative and dynamic, e.g. *have*:

Stative: *I **have** a shower.* (= I own a shower.)

Dynamic: *I'**m having** a shower.* (= I'm taking a shower at the moment.) *I have a shower every morning.* (= I take a shower every morning.)

Other verbs that can change their meaning include: *come, love, appear, see* and *weigh.*

TIP The rules for using dynamic and stative verbs with the present simple or present continuous are also true for other tenses in the simple or continuous forms.

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Exercises

1 Complete the sentences with A or B.

1	I see my colleagues B	A	at the moment.
2	I'm seeing my colleagues A	B	twice a week.
3	I'm weighing	A	the package.
4	I weigh	B	too much!
5	Jill and John come from	A	Canada via the USA.
6	Jill and John are coming from	B	Canada – Ottowa to be exact.
7	I think	A	about it.
8	One moment. I'm thinking	B	we should go.
9	Mandy is being clever	A	by saving all the money from her new job.
10	Mandy is clever	B	and always gets good grades.

2 Read this conversation. Find five more mistakes in the tourist's English. Then listen and check.

Tourist:	Hello. I'm trying to find Trafalgar Square but I ~~'m not knowing~~ don't know the way. Can you help me?
Local person:	Sure. It's easy from here. Go straight on and turn left at the large bookshop on the corner.
Tourist:	Sorry, I'm not understanding you. I'm not speaking English very well. Are you meaning straight up this road?
Local person:	That's right.
Tourist:	Thanks very much. Sorry for my English.
Local person:	No, it's very good.
Tourist:	Thank you, but I'm not believing you. I'm being in England for a month, so I hope it gets better.
Local person:	I'm sure it will.

3 Choose the correct form of the verbs.

1 I *believe* / *'m believing* you might be right about this answer.
2 Give it back. It *belongs* / *'s belonging* to me.
3 I *love* / *'m loving* my new school. It's much better than my old one.
4 I'm sorry but I *don't agree* / *'m not agreeing* with you. I think you're wrong.
5 The Queen *owns* / *is owning* most of the land around here.
6 I *see* / *'m seeing* what you mean.
7 Matthew *sees* / *is seeing* someone about a new job. I hope he gets it.
8 A: Why are your neighbours being so difficult about your plans to add a new floor to your house?
B: I *have* / *'m having* no idea. Jealousy, probably.

4 Write sentences that are true for you using both forms of the verbs.

1 I love ..... . I'm loving ..... .
2 I have ..... . I'm having ..... .
3 I think ..... . I'm thinking ..... .

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