

## English Verbs: Action vs Stative

An “action” verb means we actually do something, usually using our body. A “stative” verb represents a state, and can describe emotions, thoughts and feelings. It describes a state which doesn’t change frequently.

The “continuous” form of a verb is generally used only for “action” (or “dynamic”) verbs and is rarely used for “stative” verbs (sometimes called “state” or “non-action” verbs).

### Examples of “Action” verbs:

to walk, to run, to take, to give, to play, to teach, to learn, to read, to write, to eat, to work

### Examples of “Stative” verbs:

to like	to understand	to smell	to be
to love	to remember	to taste	to have
to dislike	to know	to hear	to belong
to hate	to seem	to see	to deserve
to need	to prefer	to agree	to lack
to own	to want	to disagree	to matter
to possess	to believe	to feel	to mean
to promise	to doubt	to look	to mind
to realize	to recognize	to sound	to wish
to suppose	to think	to want	

The principle grammatical difference between action and stative verbs is that stative verbs are not generally used in continuous tenses. For example:

- ~~I am being an American.~~ I **am** an American.
- ~~I am having a new phone.~~ I **have** a new phone.
- ~~I am not understanding this lesson.~~ I **don’t understand** this lesson.
- ~~This bag is belonging to me.~~ This bag **belongs** to me.
- ~~I’ve been believing in ghosts since I was a child.~~ I’ve **believed** in ghosts since I was a child.
- ~~I’ve been knowing Jim for a long time.~~ I’ve **known** Jim for a long time.

Some verbs can be both “action” and “stative”, depending on the particular context, and the meanings are different. For example:

to be (stative: permanent state)

You **are** a crazy guy.

to have (stative: possession)

I **have** three kids.

to look (stative: appearance)

That bread **looks** a bit old.

to see (stative: understand)

Oh, I **see**!

to think (stative: opinion)

I **think** English is easy.

to taste (stative: flavour)

This chocolate **tastes** good.

to be (action: temporary situation)

Why **are** you **being** so crazy today?

to have (action: temporary experience)

I **am having** a wonderful day!

to look (action: use your eyes)

What **are** you **looking** at?

to see (action: date somebody)

**Are** you **seeing** anyone at the moment?

to think (action: thoughts)

I’m **thinking** about doing a first aid course.

to taste (action: test/experiment)

A: What are you doing?

B: I’m **tasting** different cakes.

### **Important note:**

When grammatical rules demand a “gerund” (the “-ing” form of a verb), then the type of verb is not important. For example:

#### Gerund form

I'm not good **at remembering** new vocabulary.

**Having** kids can be stressful.

Do you **enjoy having** kids?

#### Grammatical Rule

A gerund must follow a preposition.

A verb phrase as the subject of a sentence must use a gerund.

The verb “enjoy” demand a gerund.

Although the above examples use stative verbs, the grammatical rules demand a gerund.

**Exercise.** Are the following verbs action or stative? Discuss the reasons for your choices.

1. to find
2. to keep
3. to stay
4. to recognize
5. to forget

#### **Source:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UsLG9\\_dd9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UsLG9_dd9w)

#### **Stative verb list:**

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/support-files/stative-verbs-list.pdf>