English grammar help for learners of English.

Comparing the use of present simple and present continuous.

Look at the list of words and decide if the sentence should be present simple or present continuous. Write the full sentence with the correct verb form.

1) Nick / always / get up / at 7.30am.

2) My friend Angela / do a course / at Seville University / this year.

3) Sorry, John / not / be / here at the moment. He / have / breakfast / in the café.

4) Occasionally / we / go out / and / have a meal / in the centre of town.

5) It / snow / a lot / in Scotland / during the winter months.

6) We / have / good weather / this week. At last! I’m fed up with the rain.

7) What / you / do / in this photograph? I / lie / on the beach / and / drink / a beer.

8) Steve / never / take / his children / to see films. He / not / like / go / to the cinema / now.

9) These / be / the minister’s travel plans. She / get / the train to London Heathrow / then she / take / the plane to New York at 16.15.

10) Where / they / stay / at the moment? They / stay / in a small flat / in the High Street. They / not / want / to stay / with me.

11) Nick and Emma / sometimes / pick up / the children from school. They / not always / get / the bus.

12) The situation / be / very bad at the moment. John / can / not / find work.
Teacher’s notes.
(Time for activity: 20 mins approx. Level: elementary.)

Answers to exercise:

1) Nick always gets up at 7.30am.

2) My friend Angela is doing a course at Seville University this year.

3) Sorry, John isn’t here at the moment. He’s having breakfast in the café.

4) Occasionally we go out and have a meal in the centre of town.

5) It snows a lot in Scotland during the winter months.

6) We’re having good weather this week. At last! I’m fed up with the rain.

7) What are you doing in this photograph? I’m lying on the beach and drinking a beer.

8) Steve never takes his children to see films. He doesn’t like going to the cinema now.

9) These are the minister’s travel plans. She gets the train to London Heathrow then she takes the plane to New York at 16.15.

10) Where are they staying at the moment? They’re staying in a small flat in the High Street. They don’t want to stay with me.

11) Nick and Emma sometimes pick up the children from school. They don’t always get the bus.

12) The situation is very bad at the moment. John can’t (cannot) find work.

Notes:
The exercise only includes present usage of the present continuous tense (not future sense). The sentences have been contextualised so as not to confuse students when choosing between the two aspects of the present. Exceptions could be:

question 9 – students may write correctly: “she’s getting” and “she’s taking” (with future meaning). The present simple use for itineraries for is not hard and fast. It fact, in present simple, the travel plans could refer to a usual itinerary or a future one.

The only other variation might be where “always” is used. This could be used in the continuous when said in a complaining tone eg. “Nick’s always getting up at 7.30am.” This means somebody doesn’t like it and complains. This use is not usually addressed at elementary level, however.

Enjoy the class!