

Present Simple Tense

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When life gives you a hundred reasons to cry, show life that you have a thousand reasons to smile.

- Unknown

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A common problem with the translation from Tagalog (or a dialect of) to English is the use of several parts of English.

Present Simple is one of those parts.

We have 3 factors, which determine the use of present simple.

1. Is it a fact?
2. Does it happen repeatedly or regularly?
3. Is it happening now? (some instances)

If you are talking about something, which is ongoing (a friendship, a job, a hobby, a routine etc...), then the default is to use the present simple.

The basic meaning is:

It happened in the past > It happens now > It will happen in the future.

We are not talking about when the action happens, but more about the action itself.

We are basically describing all 3 times in one.

(We only use the past when we want to refer to something that happened in the past and does not repeat itself in the present or in the future).

Examples:

1. John and I go to the cinema twice a week and we play golf together on Sundays.
(Question? Have these actions happened in the past, happen now, and will happen in the future? If the answer is 'yes' then we use the present simple).
2. We are very close friends and when she has a problem she always asks for my advice or help.
3. We do not see each other very often, but he comes to visit me once a year.

Look at the actions to see if they repeat themselves or happen more than once with no time period.

Now let us look at some incorrect sentences, which I often see when reading English written by Filipino students.

She supports me with all the decisions I will make. (Here the person is only talking about the decisions he/she will make in the future, not the decisions they have made in the past, and make now. This does not follow the simple present rules).

All parts of her character, positive or negative, I accepted. (What the speaker is saying is that they accepted the character traits of the person in the past but not now. This also does not follow the rules).

We are both 1st year students back then. (If we are students, we are students now, not before now. If I want to talk about before, I say “we were students back then” We cannot use past times with present statements. It does not follow the rules).

Since that day we always went to work together. (This is a perfect situation to use the present perfect. We are talking about ‘from then’ (that day) until now. We cannot use ‘went’ because it only talks about the past. Present perfect tense = ‘we have always gone to work together’ = from then until now. The use of ‘since’ does not allow us to use present simple).

If I needed to go home for a while, he usually helps me. (The 1st part of the sentence is in the past (‘needed’) so the next part must also be in the past, or If in the present, we begins ‘when I need to go home for a while, he always helps me. Sentences, which express 1 tense, must stay in that tense).

Facts.

Facts do not refer to time unless specifically stated.

I go home at 5pm.

The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. (It always does and always will).

London is the capital of England. (It has been and will continue to be).

I like fresh coffee. (I did before, I do now, I will in the future).

Practice:

To practice making present simple sentences, talk about:

Your daily routine from Monday to Friday.

Your family, (Do not say “we are 3.. in my family” this is incorrect. “there are 5 of us in my family” This is correct). Please say who they are, what they do, how old they are etc...,

Where you live and some interesting facts, and what you can do there as a tourist.

What you do on vacation.

If you wish to do the exercise you can send it to teacher@dumagueteilts.com for checking. Please allow time for me to check it. I will return it when I have the time.