



WHITESMOKE™

The Writer's Toolbox

Continuous and Non-Continuous Verbs

English verbs can be divided into three major categories. Normal verbs describe actions and can be expressed in any tense. Non-continuous verbs describe a condition or a state of being. These verbs cannot be used with the auxiliary verb "to be." Mixed verbs have two meanings, one which describes an action and one which describes a state of being.

Normal Verbs

Normal verbs describe actions. A normal verb usually describes an activity that you can see. We can use the auxiliary verb "to be" to say that an action is happening right now.

I am running.

He is sleeping.

We can also describe things happening in the past or the future.

Thomas was sleeping.

She will be starting a new job.

We can state that something is not happening, or phrase it as a question.

I was not kidding.

Were they playing baseball?

Non-Continuous Verbs

These are also called state verbs because they describe a condition or state of being. Non-continuous verbs describe the way that something is, not an action. Non-continuous verbs never use the auxiliary verb "to be."

<http://www.whitesmoke.com/blog/writers-toolbox>



Abstract Verbs

A verb is non-continuous if it describes something that is not a concrete physical action. Here are some examples.

I believe you. Not: I am believing you.

He is hungry. Not: He is being hungry.

They owe money. Not: They are owing money.

Verbs of Possession

Verbs which describe owning or belonging are non-continuous.

He owns a house. Not: He is owning a house.

The car belongs to Sam. Not: The car is belonging to Sam.

Verbs of Emotion

Verbs describing an emotional state are non-continuous.

I like apple juice. Not: I am liking apple juice.

Romeo loves Juliet. Not: Romeo is loving Juliet.

She wants spaghetti. Not: She is wanting spaghetti.

Mixed Verbs

Mixed verbs have more than one meaning. They can be used to describe an action or a state of being. Here are some examples.

We are having dinner. ("Having" describes the act of eating dinner)

I have a university degree. Not: I am having a university degree. ("Have" describes



WHITESMOKE™ The Writer's Toolbox

possession)

I am tasting this wine. (Describes the act of tasting)

This wine tastes sweet. Not: This wine is tasting sweet. (Describes the state of the wine)

You are being rude. (In this context, "being" means "acting or behaving," so it is a normal verb.)

You are short. Not: You are being short. (In this context, "are" describes a state of being.)