

## Stative Verbs for English Language Learners

An active verb, such as *go*, expresses a process (*I'm going to Disneyland*). On the other hand, a stative verb expresses a state of being or a condition (*I am tired*). Unlike action verbs, stative verbs are not used as continuous tense (*-ing*), verbs. For example, we do not say *I am being tired*.

Stative verbs express states of being (for example, *was*), preferences (*like*), perceptions (*hear*), beliefs (*hope*), knowledge (*understand*), and ownership (*had*).

One way to think about stative verbs is to think of the difference between active qualities that change readily and fixed, or static, qualities that do not change readily. It's okay to say *He is being silly*; his silliness might change, and he might not be silly a few moments from now. His silliness is not a fixed quality, so we can use the *-ing* verb form. On the other hand, we would say *She is tall*. She will still be tall in a minute or an hour. She will remain tall. Since her height is a fixed quality, we use a stative verb.

Another way to think about stative verbs is to think of the subject's ability to choose. In *She is tall*, she does not choose to be tall or have an option not to be tall. On the other hand, in *He is being silly*, he can choose to be silly or not.

Sometimes verbs that are stative can be used as active verbs: *I am thinking of applying to Chico State* expresses a process of thinking that may change at any moment, while *I think you're right* expresses a fixed belief.

Stative verbs express *sense perceptions*:

	Right! ☺	Wrong ☹
feel	The water <i>feels</i> cold.	<del>The water <i>is feeling</i> cold.</del>
hear	We <i>heard</i> the radio news.	<del>We <i>were hearing</i> the radio news.</del>
perceive	I <i>perceived</i> a very small difference in color.	<del>I <i>was perceiving</i> a very small difference in color.</del>
see	I <i>saw</i> the plane approaching.	<del>I <i>was seeing</i> the plane approaching.</del>
smell	Do you <i>smell</i> the coffee?	<del>Are you <i>smelling</i> the coffee?</del>
taste	It <i>tastes</i> bitter.	<del>It <i>is tasting</i> bitter.</del>

Stative verbs express *preferences (feelings, likes, and dislikes)*:

	Right! ☺	Wrong ☹
abhor	He <i>abhors</i> war.	<del>He <i>is abhorring</i> war.</del>
astonish	You <i>astonish</i> me!	<del>You <i>are astonishing</i> me!</del>
dislike	He <i>dislikes</i> most energy drinks.	<del>He <i>is disliking</i> most energy drinks.</del>
hate	I <i>hate</i> it when people lie.	<del>I <i>am hating</i> it when people lie.</del>
like	She <i>likes</i> pizza.	<del>She <i>is liking</i> pizza.</del>
intend	Do you <i>intend</i> to marry him?	<del>Are you <i>intending</i> to marry him?</del>
love	I <i>love</i> you.	<del>I <i>am loving</i> you.</del>
prefer	I <i>prefer</i> the salmon, thank you.	<del>I <i>am preferring</i> the salmon, thank you.</del>
satisfy	Their solution <i>satisfies</i> us.	<del>Their solution <i>is satisfying</i> us.</del>
want	I <i>wanted</i> to go early.	<del>I <i>was wanting</i> to go early.</del>
wish	She <i>wished</i> the class was still open.	<del>She <i>was wishing</i> the class was still open.</del>

Stative verbs express *knowledge* and *beliefs*:

	Right! ☺	Wrong ☹
believe	I <i>believe</i> in God.	<del>I am believing</del> in God.
doubt	I <i>doubt</i> we will be there on time.	<del>I am doubting</del> we will be there on time.
feel	We <i>feel</i> sure you will graduate.	<del>We are feeling</del> sure you will graduate.
forgive	She <i>forgave</i> him for being late.	<del>She was forgiving</del> him for being late.
guess	I <i>guess</i> I'll go with you.	<del>I am guessing</del> I'll go with you.
imagine	<i>Can you imagine</i> what might happen?	<del>Are you imagining</del> what might happen?
impress	His improvement in writing <i>impresses</i> me.	<del>His improvement in writing is impressing</del> me.
know	I <i>knew</i> it!	<del>I was knowing</del> it!
mean	What <i>do you mean</i> ?	<del>What are you meaning?</del>
realize	We <i>didn't realize</i> the bus was late.	<del>We were not realizing</del> the bus was late.
recognize	She <i>recognized</i> him from the movie poster.	<del>She was recognizing</del> him from the movie poster.
remember	He <i>remembered</i> the license plate number.	<del>He was remembering</del> the license plate number.
suppose	I <i>suppose</i> you are right.	<del>I am supposing</del> you are right.
think	He <i>thinks</i> your car gets better gas mileage.	<del>He is thinking</del> your car gets better gas mileage.
understand	I <i>understand</i> how you feel.	<del>I am understanding</del> how you feel.

Stative verbs express *being* and *ownership*

	Right! ☺	Wrong ☹
be	He <i>is</i> a football player.	<del>He is being</del> a football player.
belong	She <i>belongs</i> to the Spanish Club.	<del>She is belonging</del> to the Spanish Club.
contains	That bread <i>contains</i> whole grains.	<del>That bread is containing</del> whole grains.
consist of	The U.S.A. <i>consists of</i> fifty states.	<del>The U.S.A. is consisting of</del> fifty states.
have	He <i>has</i> time to see you in the morning.	<del>He is having</del> time to see you in the morning.
owe	She <i>owes</i> me money.	<del>She is owing</del> me money.
own	They <i>own</i> forty acres of peach trees.	<del>They are owning</del> forty acres of peach trees.
possess	He <i>possesses</i> a lot of good qualities.	<del>He is possessing</del> a lot of good qualities.
resemble	Her hat <i>resembled</i> a bird in flight.	<del>Her hat was resembling</del> a bird in flight.
seem	You <i>seemed</i> excited.	<del>You were seeming</del> excited.

*Contributed by Rosemary McKeever*



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