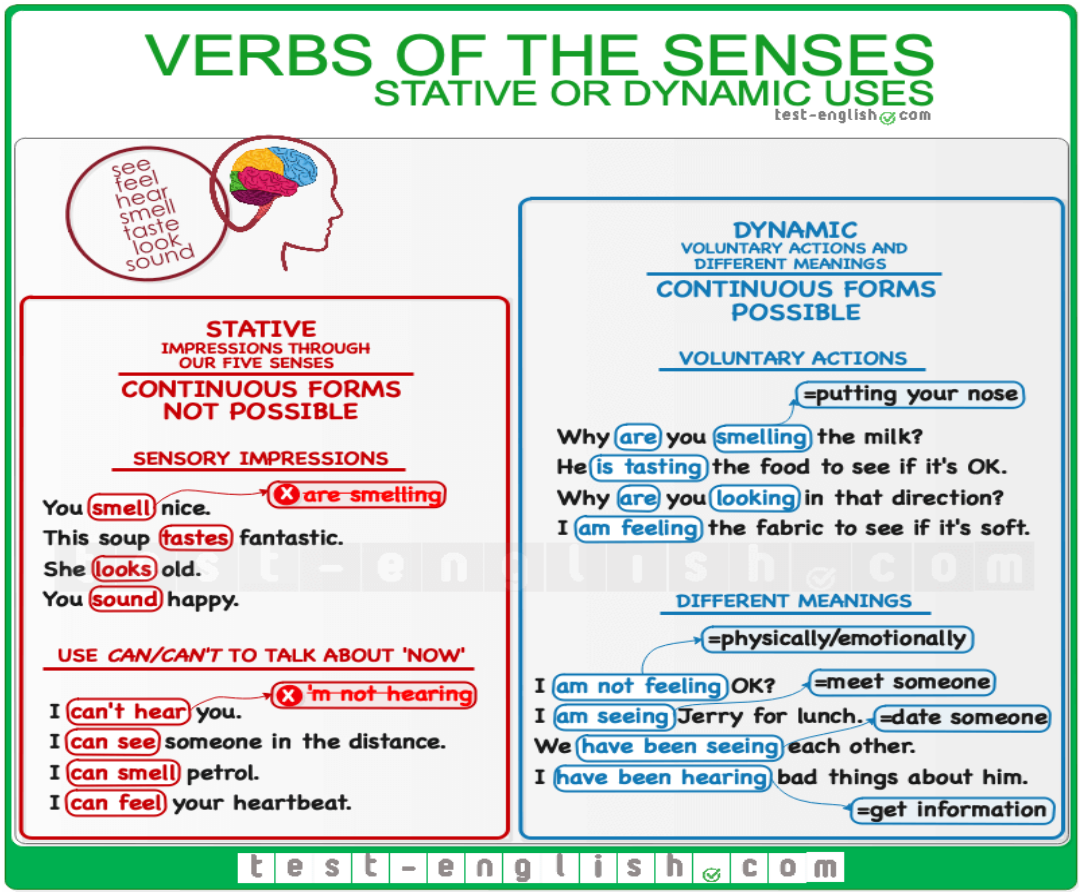


When we use the verbs feel, hear, see, smell, or

taste to talk about the impressions that we receive through our five senses (touch, hearing, sight, smell, taste), they are all non-action verbs and cannot be used in progressive forms.

You smell nice. (NOT you are smelling)

This soup tastes fantastic. What did you put in it? (NOT is tasting)

can/can’t (feel, hear, see, smell, taste)

We normally use can or can’t with these verbs (and NOT present continuous) to talk about something that is happening at the moment.

I can see a beautiful woman next to your sister. (NOT I am seeing)

Sorry, can you speak up? I can’t hear you. (NOT

I’m not hearing)

I can smell petrol. Have you just filled up the tank? (NOT I am smelling)

I've burned my tongue and now I can't taste the flavour in the dish. (NOT I am not tasting)

I can feel your heartbeat. It is very fast. (NOT I'm feeling)

look and sound

Look and sound are also stative (or non-action) verbs when they mean 'seem' or 'appear'.

She looks old.

You sound very happy.

Dynamic uses of feel, hear, look, see, smell, taste

The verbs feel, look, smell , and taste can be used in continuous forms when they are voluntary actions .

Why are you smelling the milk? Isn't it good? (=Put your nose near something to see how it smells)

He' s tasting the food to see if it needs more salt. (=Put something into your mouth to see how it tastes)

I' m feeling the fabric to see if it's soft or not. (=Touch something to see how it feels)

Why are you looking in that direction? (=direct your eyes in order to see)

We can also use feel in progressive tenses to talk about how we feel physically or emotionally.

'How are you feeling ?' 'I'm not feeling very well.'

I was feeling very weak after the operation.

The verbs hear and smell can also be used as action verbs with a different meaning.

I' m seeing Jerry for lunch. (=Meet someone)

We' ve been seeing each other for months. (=Date someone)

I’ ve been hearing really strange things about him recently. (=receive information)

Sense verbs + infinitive or gerund?

After feel, hear, listen, notice, see, watch we can use a gerund to express an incomplete action, an action in progress, or a repeated action:

I saw them kissing in the park. (=The action was in progress. I didn’t see it finish.)

They watched the man hitting a police officer. (=The action was in progress; the man hit the police officer repeatedly.)

After feel, hear, listen, notice, see, watch we can use an infinitive to talk about an action we heard or saw from beginning to end; usually a short action, and not a repeated action.

I saw them kiss in the park. (=I saw the action from start to end. It was probably a short kiss)

They watched the man hit a police officer. (=They saw the action from start to end; the man hit the police officer once)