

Mastering the Present

A clear guide to the **Present Simple**, **Present Continuous**, and **Present Perfect** – how they differ, when to use each, and how to get it right.

OXFORD ENGLISH GRAMMAR · 2ND YEAR COLLEGE



The Present Simple: Habits, Facts & Timeless Truths



Habits & Routines

She **drinks** coffee every morning.



General Facts

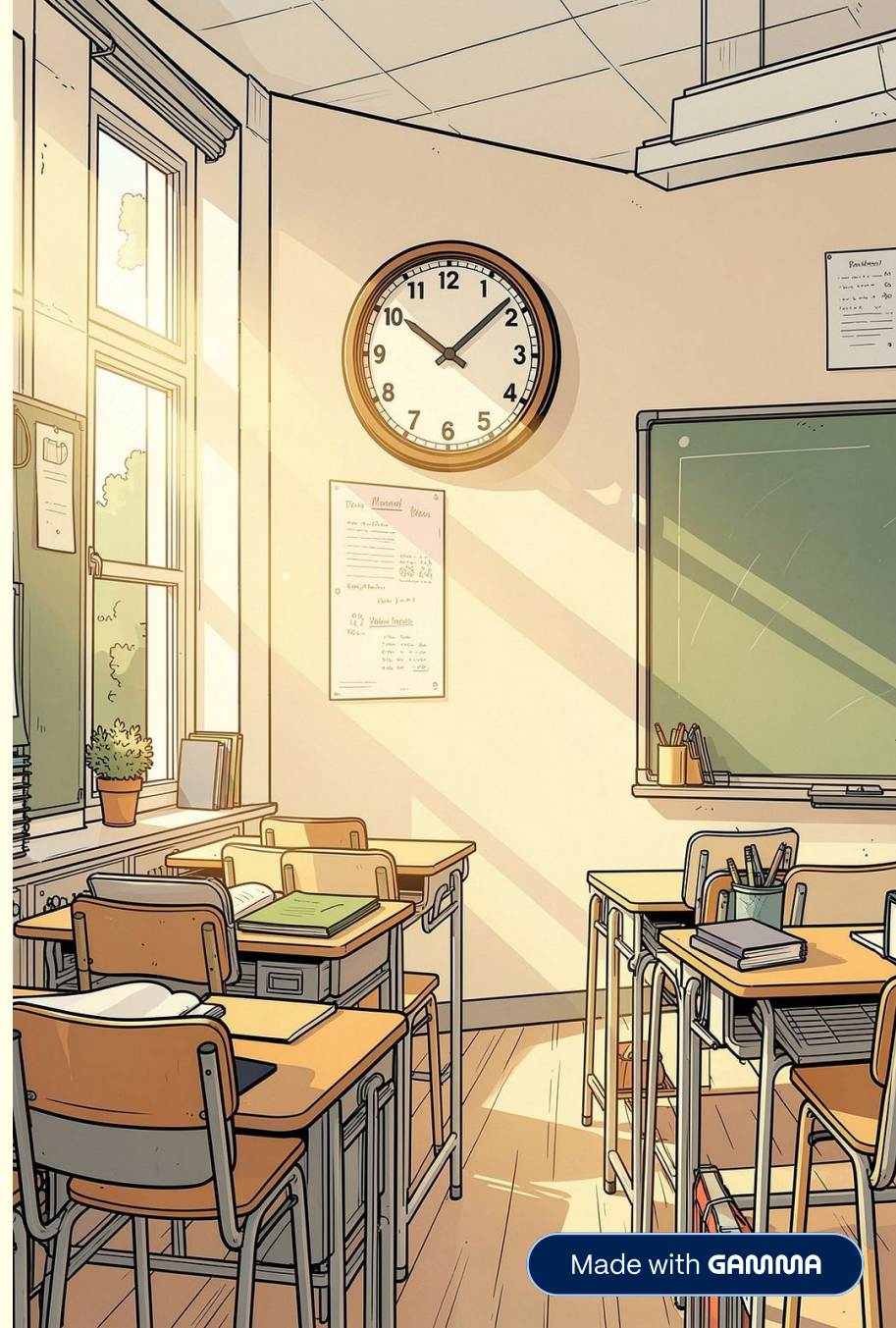
Water **boils** at 100°C.



Permanent States

He **lives** in Manchester.

Form: **Subject + base verb** (add **-s/-es** for he/she/it). Key signals: *always, every day, usually, never, often.*



Practice Time! Identifying Present Simple in Action

Which of these sentences use the Present Simple correctly? Identify the function: **habit**, **fact**, or **permanent state**.

"The train leaves at 6pm every evening."

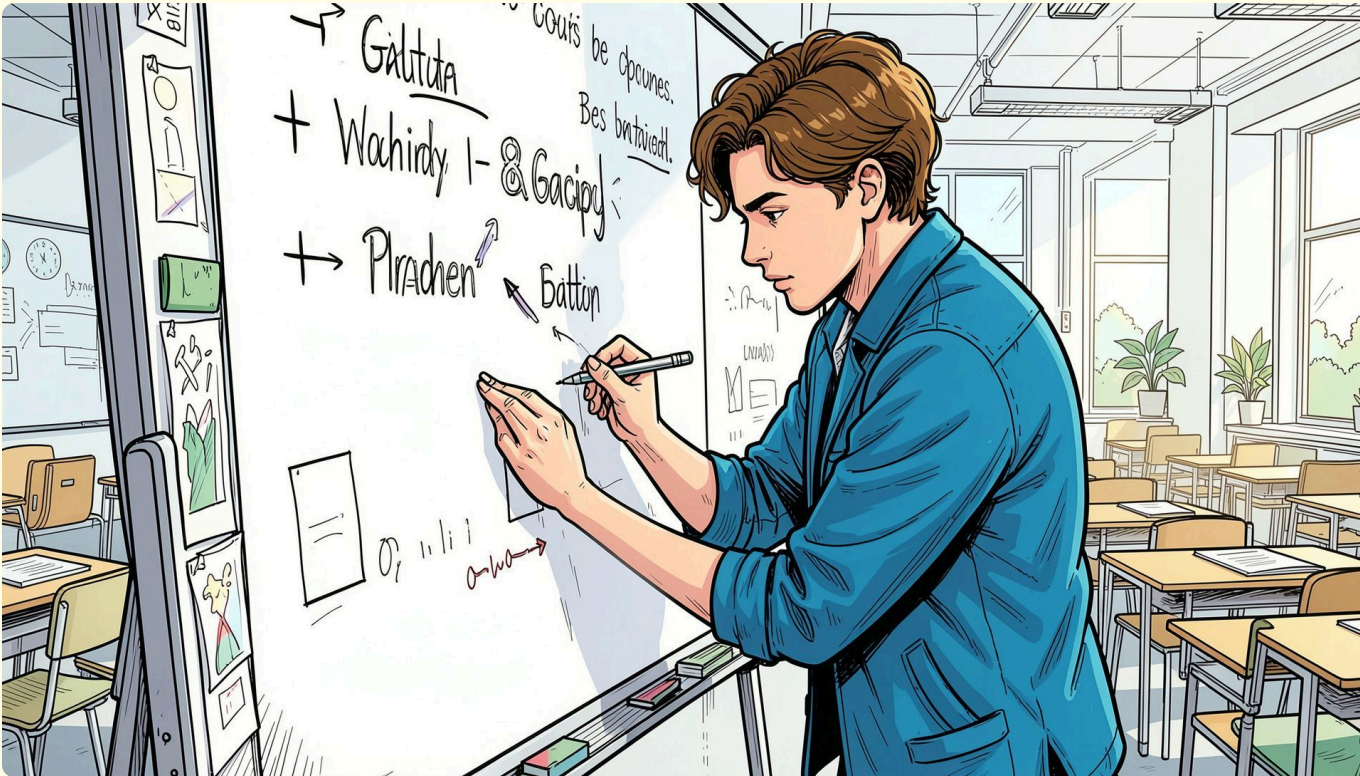
✓ **Habit / Timetable** – a repeated, scheduled action.

"Birds fly south for the winter."

✓ **General Fact** – a truth about nature.

"She is working at the library today."

✗ **Present Continuous** – a temporary action happening now.



PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Actions Happening Now

The **Present Continuous** describes actions **in progress at the moment of speaking** or **temporary situations**.

Form: **Subject + am/is/are + verb-ing**

→ **Right now**

*"I **am reading** this sentence."*

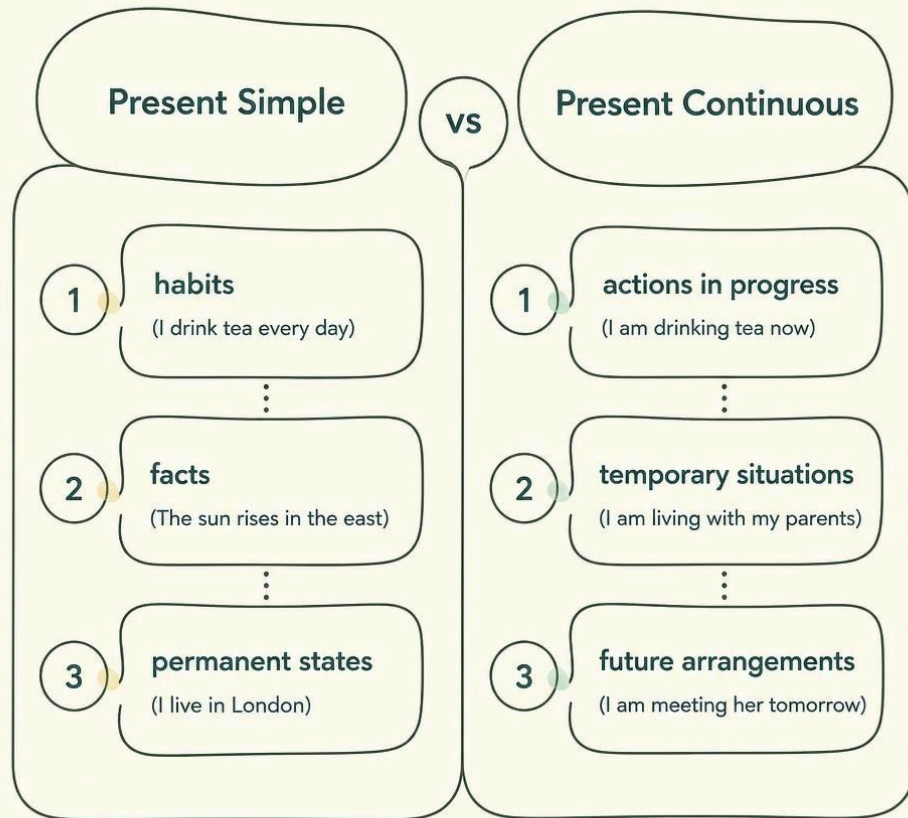
→ **Temporary situation**

*"She **is staying** with friends this week."*

→ **Future arrangement**

*"We **are meeting** at noon tomorrow."*

When to Use Which: Simple vs. Continuous



The Key Distinction

Ask yourself: **Is this permanent or temporary? Is it happening right now?**

⚠ **Stative verbs** (know, believe, love, hate, understand) rarely take the continuous form. Say "*I know the answer*" – not "*I am knowing*."

Spot the Difference! Simple or Continuous?

Choose the correct form and explain *why*.

1

"He ____ (work / is working) at a bank."

works → permanent job (Present Simple)

2

"He ____ (works / is working) late tonight."

is working → specific temporary plan (Continuous)

3

"Water ____ (boils / is boiling) at 100°C."

boils → scientific fact (Present Simple)

4

"Look! The kettle ____ (boils / is boiling)."

is boiling → happening now (Continuous)

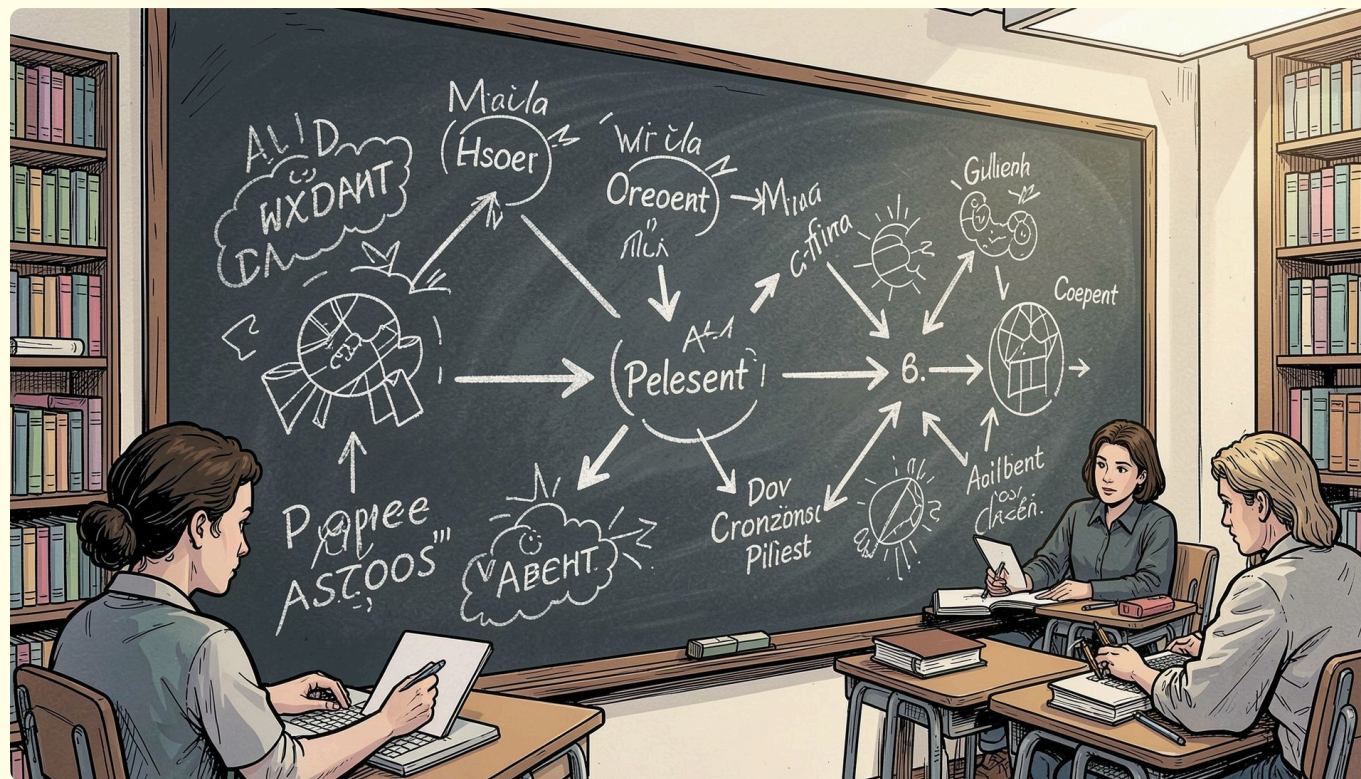


PRESENT PERFECT

Experiences & Unfinished Actions

The **Present Perfect** connects the **past to the present**. It does not specify *when* something happened.

Form: **Subject + have/has + past participle**



Life experiences

"I **have visited** Paris." (unspecified time)

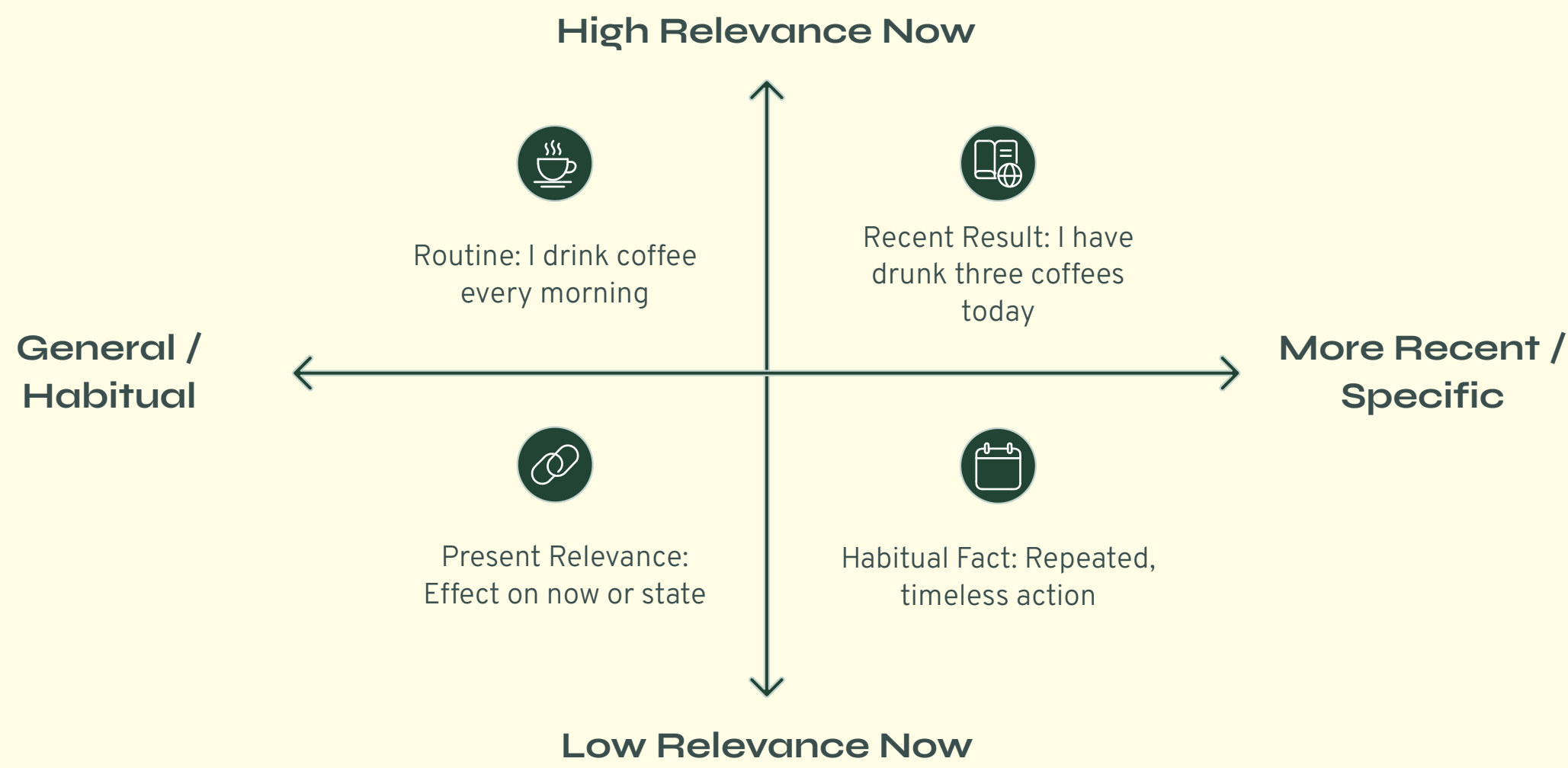
Unfinished actions

"She **has lived** here for ten years." (still lives here)

Recent past with present effect

"I **have lost** my keys." (still lost)

Present Perfect vs. Present Simple: A Tale of Two Timelines



The diagram above illustrates how the Present Simple anchors actions to routines or facts, while the Present Perfect bridges a past action to its present consequence.

Present Simple

"I **eat** lunch at 1pm."

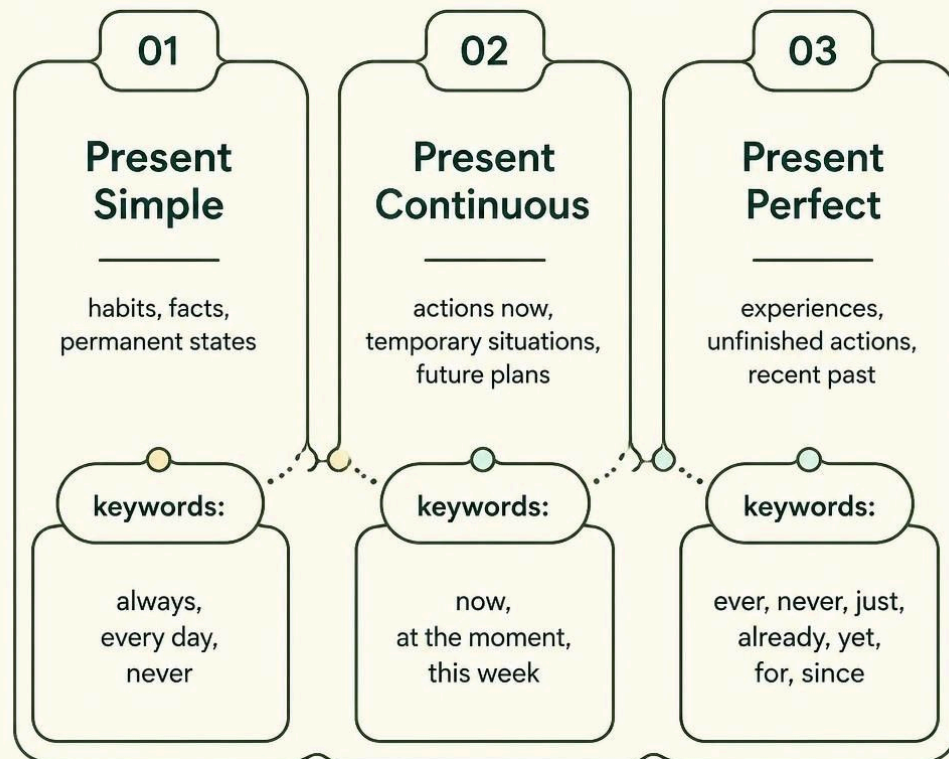
→ A regular habit. No link to now.

Present Perfect

"I **have eaten** lunch."

→ It happened; the result matters now (I'm not hungry).

All Three Together: A Comprehensive Comparison



Quick Reference

Present Simple

*She **teaches** English.*

Present Continuous

*She **is teaching** right now.*

Present Perfect

*She **has taught** for ten years.*



Your Turn! Applying Present Tense Knowledge

Complete these sentences using the correct present tense. Be ready to explain your choice.

1

"My brother ___ (live / is living / has lived) in Tokyo since 2019."

2

"The museum ___ (opens / is opening / has opened) at 9am every day."

3

"Quiet please – I ___ (try / am trying / have tried) to concentrate."

4

"___ you ever ___ (eat / have eaten) sushi?"



Homework: Write 5 sentences about your life – one for each tense function covered today.