

● Language spot

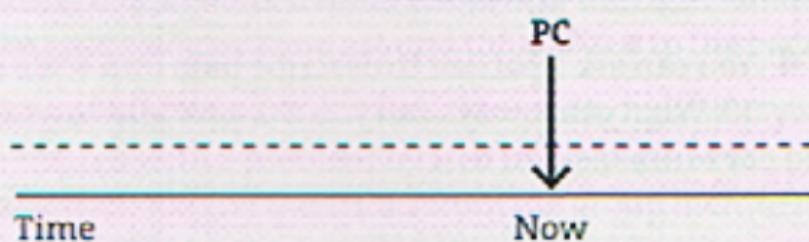
Tenses in the presenting complaint

- Understanding the time patients are referring to when they speak is crucial to making a correct diagnosis. You should be very comfortable understanding the difference between the Present Simple, Present Continuous, Present Perfect, and Present Perfect Continuous.

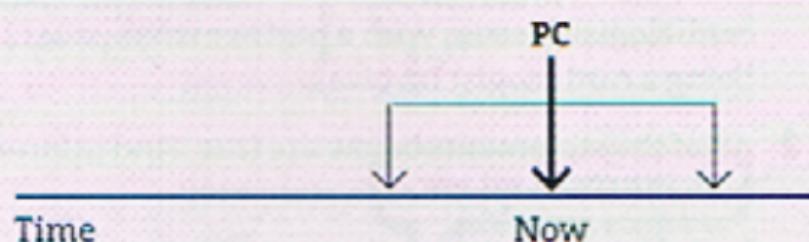
» Go to **Grammar reference** p.122

- 1 Decide whether each sentence a–i relates to the time shown in diagrams 1, 2, 3, or 4 below.

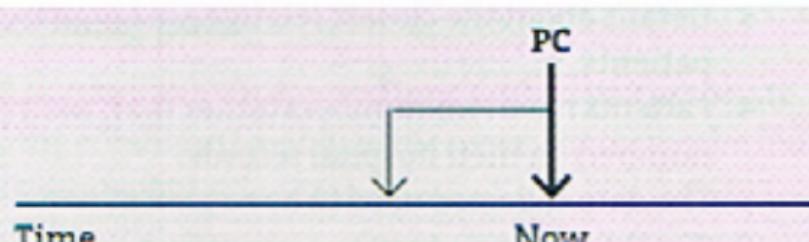
PC = Presenting complaint



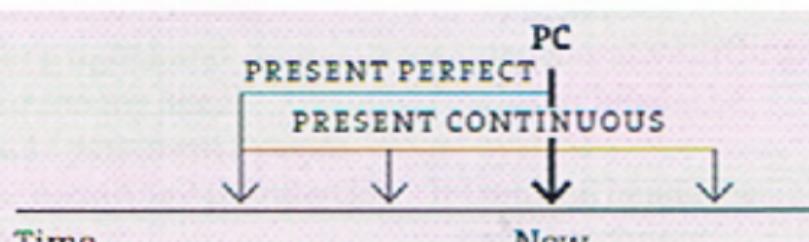
1 Present Simple



2 Present Continuous



3 Present Perfect



4 Present Perfect Continuous

How often do you get these headaches?

I've got a really bad back

I have a pacemaker

Do you feel sick?

Are you taking any medications?

How are you feeling today?

Are you having problems sleeping?

How long have you had the problem?

Have you ever had these headaches before?

Have you ever been admitted to hospital?

How long have you been getting these headaches?

How long have you been using insulin?

How long have you been taking this medication?

When did the headaches first come on?

What brought them on?

Did anything trigger them?

- a ____ I've got a headache.
- b ____ I've been having this shooting pain in my leg.
- c ____ I keep getting these flashing lights around my eyes and a sharp pain.
- d ____ I have been having these terrible backaches.
- e ____ The pain goes right through you.
- f ____ Have you been having any pain?
- g ____ I'm getting these headaches off and on now.
- h ____ I'm not taking anything for them.
- i ____ The attacks have increased.

2 Work in pairs. Complete the sentences below with the correct form of the verb. If more than one tense is possible, explain the difference.

- 1 My mother ____ (have) these pains since last Tuesday. She still has them.
- 2 ____ (you normally go) for a run at the same time every day?
- 3 The pain ____ (ease) a little since yesterday. It's better now.
- 4 I ____ (lie) in bed for four weeks now. I haven't been out of it once, doctor.
- 5 I can see the rash ____ (get worse). It's much redder.
- 6 I ____ (not take) any medication at the moment.
- 7 ____ (pain spread) to your shoulder or is it just here?

IV Symptoms and pain

Asking about symptoms

Pain is one of the commonest symptoms.

For headaches, a doctor would expect to establish most of the features below. Similar questions can be used for other forms of pain.

Feature	Typical question
Main Site	Where does it hurt? Show me where it hurts.
Radiation	Does it go anywhere else?
Character	Can you describe the pain?
Precipitating factors	Does anything bring them on?
Time of onset	When do they start?
Time of resolution	When do they stop?
Frequency	How often do you get them?
Aggravating factors	Does anything make them worse? Is there anything else that affects them?
Relieving factors	Does anything make them better?
Associated features	Do you feel anything else wrong when it's there? Have you any other problems related to the pain?
Duration	How long do they last?
Severity	How bad is it?

Description of pain

Patient's description of pain	Explanation
aching / an ache	a general pain, often in muscles and joints
boring	like a drill
burning	with heat
colicky	an intermittent pain which varies in intensity, comes and goes in waves
crampy/cramp	an involuntary spasmodic muscle contraction
crushing	a feeling of pressure
dull	a background pain, opposite of sharp
gnawing	biting
gripping	a feeling of tightness
scalding	like boiling water
sharp	acute
stabbing	like a knife
stinging	sharp, burning, like an insect sting
throbbing	with a pulse or beat

- 1 Where/it/hurt?
- 2 It/spread/anywhere else?
- 3 You/describe/the pain?
- 4 Anything/bring it on?
- 5 When/it/start?
- 6 When /it/stop?
- 7 How often/you/get it?
- 8 Anything/make/it/worse?
- 9 Anything/make/it/better?
- 10 You/have/any other problems?
- 11 You/feel/anything else/wrong?
- 12 How long/it/last?
- 13 How bad/it/ on a scale from 0 to 10?

- 14 How long/you/had it?
- 15 How long/you/ getting these pains?
- 16 You/had /it before?
- 17 You/take/any medication?

Pain is a very personal experience that varies from person to person. What feels very painful to one person may only feel like mild pain to another. And other factors, such as your emotional state and overall physical health, can play a big role in how you feel pain.

Describing your pain accurately can make it easier for your doctor to find the cause of your pain and recommend the right treatment. Here are some things your doctor can ask:

Could you tell me/Can you let me know/I'd just like to know

how long you've had the pain

how often your pain occurs

what brought on or triggered your pain

what activities or movements make your pain better or worse

where you feel the pain

whether your pain is localized to one spot or spread out

if your pain comes and goes or is constant

any medications or treatments you are using

how long it lasts

how severe it is on a scale of 1 to 10

Provocation and Palliation: What were you doing at the onset? What provokes it, what alleviates it?

Quality/Quantity: What does the pain feel like and how often? Is it sharp, dull, stabbing, crushing, throbbing, nauseating?

Region/Radiation: Where is the pain located? Does it radiate anywhere? If so, where and to what side? Is it equal if both sides are involved?

Severity Scale: How much does it hurt on a scale from 1-10?

Timing: Does the severity or character of the pain change based on time of day, activity, weather, time of year or position?

SOCRATES Site/Onset/Character/Radiation/Associations/Timing/Exacerbating or Alleviating factors/Severity

How Would You Rate Your Pain?

"On a scale from one to ten, how would you rate your pain?" This question feels difficult because pain scales deal with subjective impressions.

Think about the numbers as the following descriptors:

- 1 Minimal or barely noticeable discomfort
- 2 Present, but mild, pain
- 3 Unpleasant, but mostly ignorable, discomfort
- 4 Constant or frequent pain that doesn't interfere with daily activities
- 5 Constant pain that distracts from or prevents some activities
- 6 Constant and distressing pain that affects many activities
- 7 Unmanageable and debilitating pain, which prevents most activities
- 8 Pain so intense it makes listening, talking, and other basic activities difficult
- 9 Pain so severe it makes most activities, including moving, impossible
- 10 Pain that restricts all action, necessitating removal to an emergency care center