

Talking about Change

Present Tense forms

There are constant changes happening in our world, and when talking about the environment the choice of language we use can reflect the ongoing processes of change, the repercussions of human activity on nature and the current state of our environment.

Here we will look at the different *aspects* of the present tense; the *simple*, *continuous* or *progressive*, and *perfect*, which clarify and distinguish different perspectives of present time.

Finally, we will also take a look at the verbs commonly used to talk about environmental changes

Present Tense Forms

- 🔊 This text contains 4 different *present tense forms*, underline and match them to the forms below:

*Since the early 1900s, many glaciers around the world **have been rapidly melting**. Human activities **are** at the root of this phenomenon. Specifically, since the industrial revolution, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions **have raised** temperatures, even higher in the poles, and as a result, glaciers **are rapidly thawing**, **calving off** into the sea and **retreating** on land.*

From article on the WWF website by Lorin Hancock

- Present Continuous - **Glaciers are rapidly melting, calving off into the sea and retreating on land** – talking about current changes, which are ongoing at the time of speaking/writing.
- Present Perfect Simple - **Greenhouse gas emissions have raised temperatures** – talking about the causes, results or impact of change which are relevant now.
- Present Perfect Continuous - **Glaciers have been melting since the early 1900s** – talking about how long, from the past to the present
- Present Simple - **Human activities are at the root of this phenomenon** – a fact and/or “to be” is a state verb in this example

- 🔊 Compare the different uses of the 4 present tense forms. In terms of talking about change, which of these forms is the odd one out?
The Present Simple is the odd one out as it is used to talk about facts that are always true or permanent states rather than change, the other three are all commonly used to describe current or recent changes.

- 🔊 Using the same forms, fill in the correct present tense forms of the verbs in brackets:

*Everywhere on Earth ice **is changing**. The famed snows of Kilimanjaro **have melted** more than 80 percent since 1912. Glaciers in the Garhwal Himalaya in India **are retreating** so fast that researchers believe that most central and eastern Himalayan glaciers could virtually disappear by 2035. Arctic sea ice **has been thinning** significantly since the 1970's, and its extent **has declined** by about 10 percent in the past 30 years. When temperatures **rise** and ice **melts**, more water **flows** to the seas from glaciers and ice caps, and ocean water **warms** and **expands** in volume.*

Excerpt from National Geographic article by Daniel Glick

Verbs for talking about the Environment

- 🔗 Using the texts from the previous two articles, find verbs which describe different kinds of change and put them in the appropriate column in the chart below.
- 🔗 Consider the following environments:
 - Oceans
 - Rainforests
 - Polar regions
 - Cities
 - Deserts
 - Farmland
 - Mountains

Can you think of any more verbs you can use to talk about changes in these particular environments? Add them to the chart below:

In this brainstorming exercise, encourage students to think of synonyms and antonyms. Also think about different environmental issues and the language used for those situations, both positive and negative, particularly for the “other” category.

You don't need to use all these examples, some are more advanced than others, but make sure they add at least 5 more examples to each column.

- Verbs from the texts are in GREEN – possible additions in PURPLE

Increase	Decrease	Other kinds of environmental change
<i>Raise*</i>	<i>Retreat</i>	<i>Melt</i>
<i>Rise*</i>	<i>Thin</i>	<i>Calving off</i>
<i>Expand</i>	<i>Decline</i>	<i>Warm</i>
<i>Go up</i>	<i>Disappear</i>	<i>Adapt</i>
<i>Augment</i>	<i>Go down</i>	<i>Cool</i>
<i>Gain</i>	<i>Cut down</i>	<i>Heat up</i>
<i>Grow</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Recycle</i>
<i>Elevate</i>	<i>Lessen</i>	<i>Renew</i>
<i>Multiply</i>	<i>Shrink</i>	<i>Reuse</i>
<i>Magnify</i>	<i>Reduce</i>	<i>Create</i>
<i>Swell</i>	<i>Drop</i>	<i>Develop</i>
<i>Surge</i>	<i>Decline</i>	<i>Destroy</i>
<i>Climb</i>	<i>Contract</i>	<i>Poison</i>
<i>Shoot up</i>	<i>Diminish</i>	<i>Pollute</i>
<i>Rocket</i>	<i>Deplete</i>	<i>Clean</i>
<i>Explode</i>	<i>Run out</i>	<i>Weaken</i>
	<i>Plunge</i>	<i>Strengthen</i>
	<i>Plummet</i>	<i>Intensify</i>
		<i>Endanger</i>
		<i>Rewild</i>
		<i>Reforest</i>
		<i>Deforest</i>
		<i>Flood</i>
		<i>Dry up</i>

*Raise v Rise - there is a supplementary summary sheet pointing out the difference between these two commonly confused verbs.

Speaking

This activity works well in groups/online breakout rooms, with a change around of the groups once they've come up with enough examples. Make sure each group is coming up with examples of the different present forms and encourage them to use the verbs from the table. You might want to set a time limit on the exchanging phase as it could go on a bit too long without careful monitoring.

- 🗨️ You are going to talk about ongoing environmental issues using the themes given below and the list of verbs you have compiled in the previous exercise.
- 🗨️ In pairs/groups prepare one or two sentences on each of the themes below using at least one example of these forms: *Present Simple*, *Present Continuous*, *Present Perfect Simple* and *Present Perfect Continuous*
 - Wild fires
 - Floods
 - Plastic pollution
 - Fossil Fuels
 - Renewable Energy
 - Technological solutions
- 🗨️ Compare your ideas with other groups in the class. Whenever you find someone who has the same or a similar point, write it on the board.

Once you feel there has been enough exchanging of ideas and there are some examples shared on the board you can work as a class to talk about common ideas and perhaps if anyone had differing views on any subject.

Writing

This would work well as a homework exercise although the research could be done in groups during class time if they have access to internet or other resources available.

Select one of the above environmental themes to research further and write up a short report (approx. 200 words) focussing on using examples of each of the present forms.

For the full articles used for the texts on page 1 :

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/why-are-glaciers-and-sea-ice-melting> Oland.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/big-thaw/>