

Lesson #8

# *The progressive structure: Be + ing*

*Lesson Plan: by Catherine Schell & Dr. Gérard Beck*



# The progressive structure: Be + ing

*The goals of this week's Classroom lesson (#8) are to learn more about the structure 'Be+ing'. In this lesson, you will learn how to recognize and use 'Be+ing' in order to describe actions that are happening as you speak. You will be able to master this very important structure of the English language through the following texts, grammatical explanations, and exercises within VOA's The Classroom.*

## WARM-UP:

In the United States, this is a popular playground song among children, usually sung in order to provoke amusement about a romance between a boy and a girl. Ask your English teacher to sing it for you. Here we have used the names Marc and Maria.

Marc and Maria **sitting** in a tree:

**K-I-S-S-I-N-G**

First comes love,  
then comes marriage,  
then comes a baby in a baby carriage!



Look at the two verbs ending in –ING:

- Can you give the infinitive form of these verbs?
- What element is missing in that verbal construction? What would it be?



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# The progressive structure: Be + ing

## TEXTS

Below is an edited version of a VOA News article. Read it and underline all the BE+ING structures.

### Confucius Classroom program brings Chinese teachers to America

Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in Chicago is one of dozens in the U.S. that offers Chinese language and cultural instruction through a program called “Confucius Classrooms,” which is partially funded by the Beijing government.

The first U.S. school to take part in the program was St. Mary’s School in Medford, Oregon, where an 11th-grade class is running through a list of words for traditional Chinese instruments. The 16 and 17-year-olds are in their fourth year of learning Mandarin Chinese. A student at St. Mary’s, Carly Irvine is not sure when she will use her Chinese language skills outside the classroom. But she figures that day will come. “Since China and America are working so closely and our relationship is growing more and more,” she says. “I think it will be very important in the future to know Chinese.”

Confucius classroom is expanding rapidly around the world. St. Mary’s added Mandarin to its foreign language curriculum in 2005, and three years ago, became the first school in the country to sign up for the Confucius Classroom program.

Here’s how it works: The Chinese ministry of education sends a teacher to a school in the United States, pays about half of that teacher’s salary and living expenses, and supplies educational materials such as books and computer programs. Nearby Ashland High School looked to St. Mary’s for assistance in bringing a teacher from China to teach Mandarin. A hundred students signed up for the course.

Chris Lehman VOA News

Zheng Ling is one of two Mandarin teachers at St. Mary’s School in Medford, Oregon.

Ashland superintendent Juli Di Chiro says the skills they’re learning will be valuable if, as many advocates of teaching Mandarin say, China plays an even bigger role on the global stage in the future. “Obviously kids mastering a second language, whatever that language is, is important,” says Di Chiro. “But just given the changes in what’s going on globally with China, I think it’s important that our students have an opportunity to study the language and culture of China as well.”

Di Chiro says the school hopes to bring in a second teacher next year so that even more students can take the classes. Ashland officials are even inviting about two dozen Chinese teenagers to come study at the school. The goal is to give Ashland students the chance to experience diversity.

“For our students to be able to be comfortable in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural situations which will be their worlds as they’re entering the work force, we have to figure out ways of kind of making that happen,” says Di Chiro.

The Confucius Classroom program is expanding elsewhere, too. The program is now offered in more



than 50 other schools and universities across the United States and around the world, in more than three dozen countries including Argentina, Pakistan, Kenya and Russia.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Beijing-Helps-US-Students-Learn-Chinese--114357674.html>

## Work on the Text

1. Write a short summary of this text on Confucius in the Classroom.
2. List all the Be+ing structures in the text. What are the infinitive forms of the verbs?
3. Judging from these infinitives, can you derive the rule on how to add –ing at the end of a verb?
4. What changes does the Be+ing structure bring to the meaning of the sentence (i.e. compared to a regular present tense)

## LESSON

### BE + ING

Be+ing is one of the three aspects in English. It is used to specify that the action of the verb is on-going or happening at the time of enunciation. Therefore, this aspect has often been called ‘progressive’, as it shows the event happening over a specific length of time.

**Examples:**

- I watch TV.  
no aspect => neutral statement
- I am watching TV.  
aspect be+ing: the action (to watch TV) is happening at the time of enunciation (now)



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## LESSON (cont.)

There are four ways to add an -ing at the end of a verb:

1) simply adding -ing to most verbs:

**Examples:** Listen -> **listening**, wonder -> **wondering**, carry -> **carrying**\*

\* Always keep the 'y' in verbs ending in 'y'

2) if the verb ends in 'e', drop the 'e' and add -ing:

**Examples:** take -> **taking**,

3) If the verb is made of one syllable and ends with a consonant, double the consonant and add -ing:

**Examples:** run -> **running**, swim -> **swimming**

4) If the verb ends in 'ie', change 'ie' to 'y':

**Example:** die -> **dying**

Make sure to differentiate between the structure Be+ing and adjectives and nouns that end in -ing:

**Examples:** He is listening to the radio.

He is **listening** to an **interesting** program on the radio.

This is an adjective (you can replace it by another adjective – i.e. new)

**Dancing** is my favorite activity.

I like **running**.

These are gerunds (you can replace them by nouns – i.e. Soccer is my favorite activity – and they often come after verbs)



## Exercises

### 1. Reformulate the following using 'Be+ing'

- a) He shops for cat food at the supermarket.
- b) You walk to work.
- c) They visit their parents in Las Vegas.
- d) I eat lasagna for dinner.
- e) She crosses the intersection.

### 2. Is it a gerund, an adjective, or the Be+ing structure?

- a) He loves gardening.
- b) She is visiting New York this weekend.
- c) This is a fascinating exhibit! I love this museum.
- d) Are you drinking tea? No I'm drinking coffee.
- e) We hate driving when it rains.

### 3. Look at the following pictures and describe what the people are doing using Be+ing:



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**4. Imagine you are a journalist or foreign correspondent. You are covering a very important news-making event (a United Nations conference, the World Cup, a natural phenomenon.) Write a few sentences describing that event, using as many **be+ing** as possible.**

**Example:** (at a soccer game in the World Cup) This is Tina O'Reilly and I am reporting to you live from the World Cup. The game is getting underway. The players are entering the field [...] The referee is walking to the center of the field with the captains. The captains are flipping a coin to choose sides. The fans are cheering. The crowd is wild!



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## Wind-down

This link from VOA Learning English will show you how some people pronounce the -ING endings:

<http://www.voanews.com/learningenglish/theclassroom/programs/#>

Listen to this excerpt from Michael Jackson's thriller. Try to find all the BE+ING structures:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOnqjkJTMaA>

It's close to midnight, and something evil \_\_\_\_\_ in the dark  
Under the moonlight, you see a sight that almost stops your heart  
You try to scream, but terror takes the sound before you make it  
You start to freeze as horror looks you right between the eyes  
You're paralyzed

‘Cause this is thriller, thriller night  
And no one’s gonna save you from the beast about to strike  
You know it’s thriller, thriller night  
You \_\_\_\_\_ for your life inside a killer, thriller tonight

Text: courtesy of VOA News  
Images: courtesy of Stockvault.net, VOA News  
Video: courtesy of Youtube.com



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