



## TRANSCRIPT

## EPISODE 21: WATCHING BIRDS

Hello, I'm Margot Politis. Welcome to Study English, IELTS preparation.

Today we're going to look at the *continuous tense*, and then we're going to practice some *sentence stress*.

Our clip today is of a birdwatcher named Margaret. A birdwatcher is someone who loves watching and listening to birds.

Let's start by listening to Margaret talk about watching birds.

Some people think it's a bit of a strange pleasure, but you know, it's always interesting. It's interesting to see what they're doing. You know, we saw them sheltering under the banks as we came round and so on, and they have to live in it, so why shouldn't we?



What I'm doing is looking to see what's outside this hide because I'm doing a sheet for the 'Bird Atlas' of a radius of 500 metres from here to see all the species that are in it.

I use my binoculars and I'm using a telescope, and I use my ears because I was recording birds by call as I walked down the track here – wrens and little grass birds and stuff. In fact, if you do a lot of bird watching in the bush, you do a lot by call.



A day like today's not much good, but normally you do a lot by call, and the idea is to make sure you get all the species that are here in the area that you're surveying.

Margaret is talking about the time she spends watching birds.

When describing actions that happen for a continuous period of time, we need to use a *continuous tense*. In English, there are several continuous tenses.

Continuous tenses are formed by using the *verb* 'to be' plus the *present participle*, the 'ing' form of the verb.

Today we're going to look at the *present* and *past* continuous tenses.

Let's begin with the *present continuous tense*.

The present continuous tense describes things that are in progress.



Listen to Margaret again and see if you can hear some examples of the *present continuous tense*.

What I'm doing is looking to see what's outside this hide because I'm doing a sheet for the 'Bird Atlas' of a radius of 500 metres from here to see all the species that are in it. I use my binoculars and I'm using a telescope.



Margaret uses the phrases 'I'm doing' and 'I'm using' to describe things that are happening now.

We can use the present continuous tense in 3 ways.

Firstly, we use it to describe *actions that are happening now*.

For example, Margaret says, "I'm using a telescope".

We also use this tense to refer to *actions that are happening soon*. This is the future aspect.

Thirdly, the continuous tense can describe *actions that are happening simultaneously*, or at the same time.

In this case, the continuous tense follows the words 'when', 'while' or 'as'.

Listen to the following sentences and see if you can identify which of these three rules is being used.

"I'm going bird watching today. What are you doing?"

This is an example of 'rule 2'. Here, we use the present continuous tense to talk about things that are happening soon.

"The birds are singing while they are flying."

This is an example of rule 3, because we are describing two things that are happening at the same time – 'singing' and 'flying'.

It's a good idea to practice recognising these.

### present continuous tense

1. describes actions that are happening *now*
2. refer to actions that are happening *soon* (future)
3. describe actions that are happening *simultaneously*



But now, let's take a look at the *past continuous tense*.

And I use my ears because I was recording birds by call as I walked down the track here – wrens and little grass birds and stuff. In fact, if you do a lot of bird watching in the bush, you do a lot by call. A day like today's not much good, but normally you do a lot by call, and the idea is to make sure you get all the species that are here in the area that you're surveying.



Margaret says that she 'was recording' birds as she walked down the track.

This is the *past continuous tense*. We can use it in 2 situations.

Can you identify which one applies to Margaret?

We use it to describe an *action that was in progress at a specific time in the past*, or to describe a *continuous action that was interrupted by something else*.

So when Margaret says, "I was recording birds as I walked down the track", she is using rule 1. She is talking about a continuous action that she was doing in the past.

Here's another sentence.

"I was walking down the track when the rain started."

This is rule 2. 'Walking down the track' was interrupted by the rain.

Notice that the second clause, is introduced by the word 'when' - 'when the rain started'.

Words like 'as', 'when' or 'while' are often used to begin the second clause.

And the second clause takes the *simple past tense*.

Look at our sentences again.

"I was recording birds as I walked down the track."

"I was walking down when the rain started."



OK, now let's have a look back at the clip, this time we'll highlight all the present and past continuous tenses.

Some people think it's a bit of a strange pleasure, but you know, **it's** always **interesting**. **It's interesting** to see what **they're doing**. You know, we saw them sheltering under the banks as we came round and so on, and they have to live in it, so why shouldn't we?

**I'm doing** a sheet for the 'Bird Atlas' of a radius of 500 metres from here to see all the species that are in it.

I use my binoculars and **I'm using** a telescope, and I use my ears because I **was recording** birds by call as I walked down the track here – wrens and little grass birds and stuff. In fact, if you do a lot of bird watching in the bush, you do a lot by call.

A day like today's not much good, but normally you do a lot by call, and the idea is to make sure you get all the species that are here in the area that **you're surveying**.

Today's clip is about bird watching.

We've seen that the '-ing' can be used for continuous tenses, but '-ing' words can have lots of other uses too.

'-ing' forms the *present participle* of a verb. Some 'ing' words can also be *adjectives*, and they can act as *gerunds*.

A *gerund* is a verb that acts as a noun.

Let's look at an example.

Here's the sentence "I love swimming."

The word 'swimming' is the *present participle* of the verb 'to swim'.

But in this sentence, 'swimming' is a noun.

So the word 'swimming' is called a *gerund*.

Listen for a gerund in the clip.

**In fact, if you do a lot of bird watching in the bush, you do a lot by call.**

'Bird watching'. 'Watching' is a gerund. It is a verb that's used as a noun.

There are many phrases that use gerunds with the verb 'to go'.

They are mainly used with recreational activities, or things you do for fun.

For example, we say:



'go swimming';

'go bird watching';

'go dancing'.

"On the weekend, I usually go swimming."

"This weekend, I'd like to go dancing."

Finally today, we're going to look at some *sentence stress* and *rhythm*.

When we talk about *rhythm* in English, we mean the 'beat of the language'.

The beat of the language comes from the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables or words in a sentence.

Some words usually have a strong stress.

These are 'content words', the *nouns*, *verbs*, *adjectives* and *adverbs*. They're usually strongly stressed and carry the rhythm.

Then there are the words that have a weak stress.

These are usually the *articles*, *pronouns*, *prepositions*, and *conjunctions*. They're spoken quickly between the strongly stressed words.

As well as the different stress on words, the number of pauses you make in your speech will affect the rhythm of your language. It helps listeners tell what is important and what is secondary information.

You should practice reading using different beats, and see how this affects the meaning.

Notice how I can read the numbers:

1 2 3 4

or

1 and 2 and 3 and 4

Here, the words I'm stressing are the numbers - 1,2,3,4.

The less important words are squeezed in between the beats. The more squeezed in, the shorter they become.

1 and a 2 and a 3 and a 4

1 and then a 2 and then a 3 and then a 4



# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

And that's all for Study English today. Make sure that you listen out for the rhythm of people's speech. Copying native speakers is the best way to learn the stress and the beat.

And I'll see you next time on Study English. Bye.

