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## continuous, *adj.*

View as: [Outline](#) | [Full entry](#)Quotations: [Show all](#) | [Hide all](#)**Pronunciation:** /kən'tɪnju:əs/

**Etymology:** < Latin *continu-* 'shanging together, uninterrupted' (< *contin-ēre* intransitive sense 'to hang together,' etc.) + ... [\(Show More\)](#)

**1.**

**a.** Characterized by continuity; extending in space without interruption of substance; having no interstices or breaks; having its parts in immediate connection; connected, unbroken. [Thesaurus >](#)

- 1673 N. GREW *Idea Phytol. Hist.* II. iii. 65 It is compounded of two Bodies. The one parenchymous; continuous throughout; yet somewhat pliable without a solution of its continuity.
- 1704 I. NEWTON *Opticks* II. II. 41 The dark intervals must be diminished, until the neighbouring Rings become continuous, and are blended.
- 1796 R. SOUTHEY *Joan of Arc* VII. 6 Round the city stretch'd Their line continuous, massy as the wall Erst by the fearful Roman raised.
- 1859 C. DARWIN *Origin of Species* (1873) xii. 320 In most cases the area inhabited by a species is continuous.
- 1879 J. N. LOCKYER *Elem. Lessons Astron.* vi. 228 If we light a match and observe its spectrum, we find that it is continuous—that is, from red through the whole gamut of colour to the visible limit of the violet.
- 1881 J. C. MAXWELL *Treat. Electr. & Magnetism* (ed. 2) I. 6 Without describing a continuous line in space.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

**b.** In unbroken connection *with*; joined continuously *to*; [Thesaurus >](#) forming one mass *with*.

- 1692 J. RAY *Dissol. World* (1732) XI. v. 207 Anciently continuous with Malacca.
- 1700 S. PARKER *6 Philos. Ess.* 95 The Superficies whereto it was continuous, etc.
- 1879 G. C. HARLAN *Eyesight* II. 25 The mucous membrane of the eye is continuous with the skin.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

†**c.** *fig. Obs.* [Thesaurus >](#)

- 1642 T. FULLER *Holy State* IV. iii. 252 They were so contiguous and near in kinred, they might not be made continuous (one flesh) in marriage.

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## 2.

**a. Of immaterial things, actions, etc.: Uninterrupted in time, sequence, or essence; going on without interruption; connected, unbroken.** [Thesaurus >](#)

- 1751 J. HARRIS *Hermes* II. ii. 243      Continuatives consolidate Sentences into one continuous Whole.
- 1832 *Nat. Philos.* (Libr. Useful Knowl.) II. Electro-magnetism 60      The currents transmitted by perfect conductors are continuous; that is, their intensity is either constant, or varies insensibly during two consecutive instants.
- 1867 W. H. SMYTH *Sailor's Word-bk.* , *Continuous service men*, those seamen who, having entered for a period, on being paid off, are permitted to have leave, and return to the flag-ship at the port for general service.
- 1867 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Norman Conquest* I. App. (1876) 700      A continuous siege of six months.
- 1875 B. JOWETT in tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) V. 131      The power of abstract study or continuous thought is very rare.
- 1878 B. STEWART & P. G. TAIT *Unseen Universe* VII. §215      Which will explain the continuous life of the universe as well as its continuous energy.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

**b. Grammar. Of a verb form or aspect: denoting continuous action, = PROGRESSIVE *adj.* 2e. Cf. DURATIVE *adj.*, EXPANDED *adj.* 2b.** [Thesaurus >](#)  
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- 1887 *N.E.D.* s.v. *Be* v. B. 15      With the present participle, forming continuous varieties of the tenses.
- 1892 H. SWEET *New Eng. Gram.* I. 102      Long tenses may be either *continuous* or *recurrent*, denoting repetition, habit, etc. Thus we have a continuous present in *he lives in the country*, a recurrent present in *he goes to Germany twice a year*.
- 1898 J. C. NESFIELD *Eng. Gram.* v. 58      Continuous [tense] denotes that the event (in Present, Past, or Future time) is still *continuing*, and is not yet completed; as, 'I am loving', 'I was loving', 'I shall be loving'.
- 1904 C. T. ONIONS *Advanced Eng. Syntax* 112      When a Continuous Tense refers to a period of action, it often implies habit, e.g. 'I *shall be dining alone* all week'.
- 1947 W. S. ALLEN *Living Eng. Struct.* 79      It might be shown that as a continuous tense describes an action as it is taking place, the Present Continuous is the only real present tense we have in English.
- 1965 F. R. PALMER *Ling. Study Eng. Verb* iv. 59      Every second pair in the paradigm is progressive. There is no obvious name for the category. The terms 'continuous' and 'non-continuous' are sometimes used.
- 1985 R. QUIRK et al. *Comprehensive Gram. Eng. Lang.* 197      The *progressive aspect* (sometimes called the *durative* or *continuous aspect*) indicates a happening *in progress*.

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## SPECIAL USES

Technical uses.

**continuous assessment** *n.* *Educ.* the evaluation of a pupil's progress throughout the course of study, based on course-work as well as, or instead of, examinations; see

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also **ASSESSMENT** *n.* **5b.**

1959 *15 to 18: Rep. Cent. Advisory Council for Educ. (Eng.)* (Min. of Educ.) I. xxv. 281

Some Institutes of Education are using analogous methods of continuous assessment instead of examinations.

1973 *Scotsman* 13 Feb. 9/3 Continuous assessment makes up 55 per cent of gradings, exams 45 per cent.

1984 D. S. FRITH & H. G. MACINTOSH *Teacher's Guide to Assessm.* i. 28

Continuous assessment—a continuous updating of judgements about a pupil's performance.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous brake** *n.* a continuous series of carriage brakes controlled from one point, acting upon every carriage or wheel in a train.

1883 *Stubbs' Mercantile Circ.* 26 Sept. 862/2 The use of continuous brakes on their several lines [of railway].

(Hide quotations)

**continuous consonants** *n.* those which are capable of prolonged enunciation (opposed to *explosive*). [Thesaurus »](#) [Categories »](#)

1850 R. G. LATHAM *Eng. Lang.* (ed. 3) 144 [ Now *b, p, t*, etc. are explosive, *f, v*, etc. continuous.]

(Hide quotations)

**continuous creation** *n.* creation viewed as being a continuous process and not a single act at a particular time; *spec.* the view that the universe is in a steady state, new systems being formed continually to replace those that disappear.

1895 G. MACDONALD *Lilith* vi. 35 [ The still face might be a primeval perfection; the live eyes were a continuous creation.]

1941 C. SINGER *Short Hist. Sci. Ideas* v. 140 Averroes believed, not in a single act of creation, but in a continuous creation.

1950 F. HOYLE *Nature of Universe* v. 107 With continuous creation the apparent contradiction between the expansion of the Universe and the requirement that the background material shall condense into galaxies is completely overcome.

1956 *Ann. Reg.* 1955 397 The distribution of radio-stars favoured evolutionary theories of cosmology rather than more recent theories of continuous creation.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous-flow** *n.* used *attrib.* designating a system, device, etc., in which a fluid or other material flows continuously.

1958 *New Biol.* 25 93 The oxidation tanks were run on the continuous-flow principle, with recirculation of a portion of the effluent to inoculate the influent.

1965 *Gloss. Aeronaut. Terms* (B.S.I.) §17 p. 3 *Continuous flow oxygen system*, an oxygen system in which the oxygen flows during both inspiration

and expiration.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous function** *n.* *Math.* a function that varies continuously, and whose differential coefficient therefore never becomes infinite.

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**continuous impost** *n.* see [IMPOST](#) *n.*<sup>1</sup>

**continuous kiln** *n.* see quot. [1910](#)<sup>2</sup>.

- 1890 *Sci. Amer.* 11 Jan. 21/3 (*heading*) A continuous brick kiln.
- 1901 *Notes on Building Construction* (ed. 5) III. iii. 193 Tunnel kilns, called also Continuous, 'Running', 'Perpetual', or 'Draw-Kilns'.
- 1910 *Encycl. Brit.* IV. 520/1 Brick-kilns can all be grouped under two main types—Intermittent kilns and Continuous kilns.
- 1910 *Encycl. Brit.* IV. 520/2 The 'continuous' kiln is really made up of a number of separate kilns or firing-chambers, built in series and connected in such a manner that the products of combustion from one kiln may be made to pass through a number of other kilns before entering the flue.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous miner** *n.* see quot. [1967](#).

- 1958 A. NELSON *Methods of Working* v. 61 Further studies by mining engineers led to the design and development of machines which combined the operations of cutting, breaking and loading the coal. These combined machines are popularly known as 'continuous miners'.
- 1967 *Gloss. Mining Terms* (B.S.I.) VIII. 9 *Continuous miner*, a machine used mainly for the cutting and loading of coal or other mineral in mine entries or narrow places.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous process** *n.* an industrial process which operates without interruption (opp. *batch process*).

- 1909 *Daily Chron.* 11 June 7/2 Everything being on the automatic and continuous-process principle.
- 1922 *Encycl. Brit.* XXXI. 389/1 The case which appears to have presented most difficulty in national legislation is the *continuous process*.
- 1954 *Economist* 20 Feb. 537/2 Strenuous attempts to convert their batch processes to the continuous processes which have so much lower labour costs.
- 1961 *Times* 22 Nov. 21/6 Many chemical plants, especially the continuous-process type, need very precise adjustment.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous spectrum** *n.* 'a spectrum not broken by bands or lines, but having the colors shaded into each other continuously, as that from an incandescent solid or liquid, or a gas under high pressure' (WEBSTER1890) (cf.

quot. 1879 at sense 1a).

1902 *Encycl. Brit.* XXXII. 124/2 Fluorescent radiation, showing a continuous or banded spectrum, can be excited in many gases and vapours.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous stationery** *n.* see quot. 1942.

1942 H. A. MADDOX *Dict. Stationery* (ed. 2) 26 *Continuous Stationery*, a modern form of mechanical accounting stationery in which the sheets are of continuous length, sometimes folded concertina fashion.

1959 *B.S.I. News* Dec. 15 The sizes do not necessarily apply to continuous stationery.

1970 *Brit. Printer* June 76 Continuous stationery for computers is one of the fastest-growing specialisations in printing.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous stem** *n.* *Bot.* one without articulations.

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1866 J. LINDLEY & T. MOORE *Treasury Bot.* 325 [ A stem is said to be continuous which has no joints.]

(Hide quotations)

**continuous style** *n.* in Gothic Architecture, a style in which the mullions of a window are continued in the tracery, as distinguished from the geometrical style of earlier Gothic.

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1849 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Archit.* 379 There is also a tendency throughout the Continuous style, to extend the ornamental stonework.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous tone** *n.* see quot. 1968.

1933 C. W. GAMBLE *Mod. Illustr. Processes* vii. 125 We may take an artist's drawing of a landscape of washes of black pigment upon white paper as representing a drawing in 'continuous' tone.

1967 E. CHAMBERS *Photolitho-offset* iv. 43 With the indirect method the first negatives are made as formerly and they may be in continuous-tone or in dot formation.

1968 *Gloss. Terms Offset Lithogr. Printing* (B.S.I.) 10 *Continuous tone*, an image in which tonal gradation is produced by changes in density.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous variation** *n.* *Biol.* see quot. 1961.

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1894 W. BATESON *Materials Study Variation* 18 The fact that Continuous Variations exist is also none the less a fact.

1961 *Webster's 3rd New Internat. Dict. Eng. Lang.* , *Continuous variation*, variation in which a series of intermediate types connects the extremes.

(Hide quotations)

**continuous voyage** *n.* a voyage which, though

interrupted by stops at ports or otherwise, is regarded as a single voyage in reference to the purpose for which it was undertaken (e.g. the consignment of goods or materials).

- 1806 C. ROBINSON *Rep. Cases Court Admiralty* V. 365 (*margin*) Continuous voyage in the colonial trade of the enemy.
- 1808 C. ROBINSON *Rep. Cases Court Admiralty* VI. App. note ii, That branch of the colonial principle which relates to continuous voyages.
- 1902 *Encycl. Brit.* XXXI. 130/2 If the ultimate destination of goods, though shipped first to a neutral port, is enemy's territory, then, according to the 'doctrine of continuous voyages', the goods may be treated as if they had been shipped to the enemy's territory direct.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

**continuous wave** *n.* an electromagnetic (esp. radio) wave having constant amplitude and intensity; also *attrib.*

- 1911 A. B. SMITH *Mod. Amer. Telephony* xxv. 663 If it were possible to produce continuous waves for wireless telegraphy.
- 1920 H. M. DOWSETT *Wireless Telegr.* iv. 70 Continuous wave transmitters.
- 1920 H. M. DOWSETT *Wireless Telegr.* iv. 92 Any other long-distance continuous wave system.
- 1933 J. H. MORECROFT *Princ. Radio Communication* (ed. 3) vii. 775 Tube *B* acts as oscillator and detector (self-heterodyne) for reception of continuous-wave signals.
- 1951 *Gloss. Aeronaut. Terms* (B.S.I.) III. 27 *Automatic direction finder*, an airborne equipment designed to indicate automatically the bearing of a continuous-wave ground beacon relative to the bearing of the aircraft.

[\(Hide quotations\)](#)

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continuous, adj.

Second edition, 1989; online version June 2011.

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40280>>; accessed 16 June 2011. Earlier version first published in *New English Dictionary*, 1893.

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