

Present perfect continuous and simple (I have been doing and I have done)

A

Study these example situations:



Ann's clothes are covered in paint.
She **has been painting** the ceiling.

Has been painting is the *present perfect continuous*.

We are interested in the activity. It does not matter whether something has been finished or not. In this example, the activity (painting the ceiling) has not been finished.



The ceiling was white. Now it is blue.
She **has painted** the ceiling.

Has painted is the *present perfect simple*.

Here, the important thing is that something has been finished. 'Has painted' is a *completed action*. We are interested in the *result* of the activity (the painted ceiling), not in the activity itself.

Compare these examples:

- My hands are very dirty. I've **been repairing** the car.
- She's **been smoking** too much recently. She should smoke less.
- It's nice to see you again. What **have you been doing** since we last met?
- Where have you been? **Have you been playing** tennis?

- The car is OK again now. I've **repaired** it.
- Somebody **has smoked** all my cigarettes. The packet is empty.
- Where's the book I gave you? What **have you done** with it?
- **Have you ever played** tennis?

B

We use the continuous to ask or say *how long* (for an activity that is still happening):

- How long **have you been reading** that book?
- Mary is still writing letters. She's **been writing** letters **all day**.
- They've **been playing** tennis since 2 o'clock.

We use the simple to ask or say *how much*, *how many* or *how many times* (completed actions):

- How many pages of that book **have you read**?
- Mary **has written** ten letters today.
- They've **played** tennis three times this week.

C

There are some verbs (for example, **know/like/believe**) that are normally not used in the continuous:

- I've **known** about it for a long time. (*not* 'I've been knowing')

For a list of these verbs, see Unit 4A.

1 Read the situations and write two sentences using the words in brackets.

- 1 Tom started reading a book two hours ago. He is still reading it and now he is on page 53.
(read / for two hours) He has been reading for two hours.
(read / 53 pages so far) He has read 53 pages so far.
- 2 Linda is from Australia. She is travelling round Europe at the moment. She began her tour three months ago.
(travel / for three months) She
(visit / six countries so far)
- 3 Jimmy is a tennis player. He began playing tennis when he was ten years old. This year he is national champion again – for the fourth time.
(win / the national championship four times)
(play / tennis since he was ten)
- 4 When they left college, Mary and Sue started making films together. They still make films.
(make / ten films since they left college) They
(make / films since they left college)

2 For each situation, ask a question using the words in brackets.

- 1 You have a friend who is learning Arabic. You ask:
(how long / learn / Arabic?) How long have you been learning Arabic?
- 2 You have just arrived to meet a friend. She is waiting for you. You ask:
(how long / wait?)
- 3 You see somebody fishing by the river. You ask:
(how many fish / catch?)
- 4 Some friends of yours are having a party next week. You ask:
(how many people / invite?)
- 5 A friend of yours is a teacher. You ask:
(how long / teach?)
- 6 You meet somebody who is a writer. You ask:
(how many books / write?)
(how long / write / books?)
- 7 A friend of yours is saving money to go on holiday. You ask:
(how long / save?)
(how much money / save?)

3 Put the verb into the more suitable form, present perfect simple (I have done etc.) or continuous (I have been doing etc.).

- 1 Where have you been? Have you been playing (you/play) tennis?
- 2 Look! Somebody (break) that window.
- 3 You look tired. (you/work) hard?
- 4 ‘..... (you/ever/work) in a factory?’ ‘No, never.’
- 5 ‘Jane is away on holiday.’ ‘Oh, is she? Where (she/go)?’
- 6 My brother is an actor. He (appear) in several films.
- 7 ‘Sorry I’m late.’ ‘That’s all right. I (not/wait) long.’
- 8 ‘Is it still raining?’ ‘No, it (stop).’
- 9 I (lose) my address book. (you/see) it anywhere?
- 10 I (read) the book you lent me but I (not/finish) it yet.
- 11 I (read) the book you lent me, so you can have it back now.

How long have you (been)...?

A Study this example situation:



Bob and Alice are married. They got married exactly 20 years ago, so today is their 20th wedding anniversary.

They **have been** married for 20 years.

We say:

They **are** married. (*present*)

but How long **have they been** married? (*present perfect*)
(*not* 'How long are they married?')

They **have been** married for 20 years.

(*not* 'They are married for 20 years')

We use the *present perfect* to talk about something that began in the past and still continues now. Compare the *present* and the *present perfect*:

- Amy **is** in hospital.
- but* She **has been** in hospital **since Monday**. (*not* 'Amy is in hospital since Monday')
- We **know** each other very well.
- but* We **have known** each other **for a long time**. (*not* 'we know')
- **Are you waiting** for somebody?
- but* How long **have you been waiting**?

B I **have been doing** something (*present perfect continuous*) = 'I started doing something in the past and I am still doing it (or have just stopped)':

- I've **been learning** English **for a long time**. (*not* 'I am learning')
- Sorry I'm late. **Have you been waiting** long?
- It's **been raining** **since I got up this morning**.

The action can be a repeated action:

- 'How long **have you been driving**?' 'Since I was 17.'

C I **have done** (*simple*) or I **have been doing** (*continuous*)

The continuous is more usual with **how long**, **since** and **for** (see also Unit 10B):

- I've **been learning** English **for a long time**. (*not usually* 'I've learnt')

You can normally use either the continuous or simple with **live** and **work**:

- John **has been living** / **has lived** in London **for a long time**.
- How long **have you been working** / **have you worked** here?

But we use the *simple* with **always**:

- John **has always lived** in London. (*not* 'has always been living')

You can use the continuous or the simple for actions repeated over a long period:

- I've **been collecting** / I've **collected** stamps **since I was a child**.

Some verbs (for example, **know/like/believe**) are not normally used in the continuous:

- How long **have you known** Jane? (*not* 'have you been knowing')
- I've **had** a pain in my stomach **since I got up this morning**.

For a list of these verbs, see Unit 4A. For **have** see Unit 17.

D We use the present perfect *simple* in negative sentences like these:

- I **haven't seen** Tom **since Monday**. (= Monday was the last time I saw him)
- Jane **hasn't phoned** me **for two weeks**. (= the last time she phoned was two weeks ago)

11.1 Are the underlined verbs right or wrong? Correct them if they are wrong.

- 1 Bob is a friend of mine. I know him very well. ...RIGHT...
- 2 Bob is a friend of mine. I know him for a long time. ...WRONG: I've known him...
- 3 Sue and Alan are married since July.
- 4 The weather is awful. It's raining again.
- 5 The weather is awful. It's raining all day.
- 6 I like your house. How long are you living there?
- 7 Graham is working in a shop for the last few months.
- 8 I'm going to Paris tomorrow. I'm staying there until next Friday.
- 9 'Do you still smoke?' 'No, I gave it up. I don't smoke for years.'
- 10 That's a very old bicycle. How long do you have it?

11.2 Read the situations and write questions from the words in brackets.

- 1 John tells you that his mother is in hospital. You ask him:
(how long / be / in hospital?) ...How long has your mother been in hospital?...
- 2 You meet a woman who tells you that she teaches English. You ask her:
(how long / teach / English?)
- 3 You know that Jane is a good friend of Carol's. You ask Jane:
(how long / know / Carol?)
- 4 Your friend's brother went to Australia some time ago and he's still there. You ask your friend:
(how long / be / in Australia?)
- 5 Tim always wears the same jacket. It's a very old jacket. You ask him:
(how long / have / that jacket?)
- 6 You are talking to a friend about Alan. Alan now works at the airport. You ask your friend:
(how long / work / at the airport?)
- 7 A friend of yours is having driving lessons. You ask him:
(how long / have / driving lessons?)
- 8 You meet somebody on a train. She tells you that she lives in Glasgow. You ask her:
(always / live / in Glasgow?)

11.3 Complete B's answers to A's questions.



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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Amy is in hospital, isn't she? 2 Do you see Ann very often? 3 Is Margaret married? 4 Are you waiting for me? 5 You know Linda, don't you? 6 Do you still play tennis? 7 Is Jim watching TV? 8 Do you watch TV a lot? 9 Have you got a headache? 10 George is never ill, is he? 11 Are you feeling ill? 12 Sue lives in London, doesn't she? 13 Do you still go to the cinema a lot? 14 Would you like to go to New York one day? | <p>Yes, she <u>has been</u> in hospital since Monday.</p> <p>No, I <u>haven't seen</u> her for three months.</p> <p>Yes, she married for ten years.</p> <p>Yes, I for the last half hour.</p> <p>Yes, we each other for ages.</p> <p>No, I tennis for years.</p> <p>Yes, he TV all evening.</p> <p>No, I TV for a long time.</p> <p>Yes, I a headache all morning.</p> <p>No, he ill since I've known him.</p> <p>Yes, I ill since I got up.</p> <p>Yes, she in London for the last few years.</p> <p>No, I to the cinema for ages.</p> <p>Yes, I to go to New York.</p> <p>(use always/want)</p> |
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