

39 Present perfect continuous



1 Form

We form the present perfect continuous with *have + been + the -ing form of the verb*:

POSITIVE	<i>I have ('ve) been waiting. He has ('s) been washing the car. They have ('ve) been cooking.</i>
NEGATIVE	<i>I have not (haven't) been waiting. He has not (hasn't) been washing the car. We have not (haven't) been cooking.</i>
QUESTIONS	<i>Have you been waiting? (Yes, I have.) Has he been washing the car? (No, he hasn't.) What have you been doing?</i>

Pronunciation ► 1.19

2 Actions/situations up to the present

We use the present perfect continuous to talk about actions or situations that started in the past and are still continuing now:

We've been waiting to hear from them. Clare's been living with her cousins.


We often use *for* or *since* to answer the question *How long?*:

We've been waiting for about an hour. I've been working since three o'clock.

We can also use the present perfect continuous if the action or situation finishes at the time of speaking:

I've been waiting in this queue for an hour! (... but now I've reached the ticket office.)

Clive's been driving all morning. (... but now he's arrived.)

 We use the present perfect, NOT the present perfect continuous, when we say how many times we have done something, or how much we have done:

✗ I've been washing the car twice this week. ✓ I've washed the car twice this week.

✗ We've been having three lessons so far. ✓ We've had three lessons so far.

 We don't usually use the present perfect continuous with *always*, *already* and *yet*:

✗ I haven't been washing the car yet. ✓ I haven't washed the car yet.

3 Recent continuous actions with present results

We often use the present perfect continuous to talk about an activity in the recent past:

'I haven't seen you in the office recently.' 'I know. I've been working at home.'


We often use this form to explain a present situation or result; it gives the cause:

'Your clothes are all wet!' 'I know. I've been washing the car.'

'Have you lost weight?' 'Yes, I've been going to the gym a lot.'

Sometimes the action is not complete:

I've been reading 'War and Peace' but I'm only half way through it.

 We use the present perfect simple or continuous, NOT the present simple or continuous, for a situation that is still continuing:

✗ I live here for five months. ✓ I've lived here for five months.

✗ I am living here for five months. ✓ I've been living here for five months.

Practice

- 1 Write sentences, using the words below and the present perfect continuous form of the verbs. Then write true answers for questions 5 and 6.  3.13 Listen and check.

- 0 We / wait / for ages *We've been waiting for ages.*
- 00 How long / you / wait ? *How long have you been waiting?*
- 1 David / watch TV / all afternoon
- 2 What / he / do ?
- 3 Elizabeth / not work / this week
- 4 My grandparents / not feel well / recently
- 5 How long / you / study English ?
- 6 How long / you use / this book ?

- 2 Match the situations A–I with the explanations 1–8. Then complete the explanations with suitable verbs from the box. Use the present perfect continuous.

eat lift listen not brush ~~not live~~ not sleep run study use

- A John's put on a lot of weight. F Alec's got big muscles.
 B Aleesha's sweating and her legs ache. G Marianne's looking very tanned.
 C Mike's ears hurt. H Debbie expects to get an A in the test.
 D Clare's feeling tired. I Marcus is at the dentist. He needs three fillings.
 E ~~Rashid still doesn't speak much English.~~

- 0 He *hasn't been living* in the UK for long. *E*
- 1 She a sun bed.
- 2 He to loud music.
- 3 He too many desserts.
- 4 She very hard.
- 5 He his teeth properly.
- 6 She a marathon.
- 7 He weights at the gym.
- 8 She very well recently.

- 3 **GRAMMAR IN USE** Choose the correct words in *italics*.

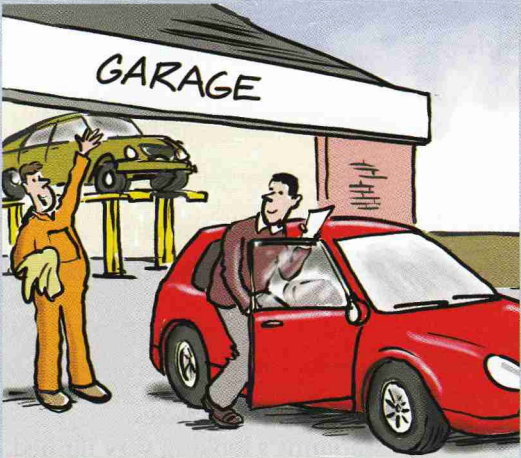

 3.14 Listen and check.

“You won't believe this but (0) *I've* / *I'm* been learning to drive! I suppose it's a bit late to learn to drive at my age, but my husband used to do all the driving. So when he died I really needed to learn. In fact I've really been (1) *enjoyed* / *enjoying* it. I've (2) *had* / *been having* lessons for six months now. I suppose I've (3) *been having* / *had* about thirty lessons so far. I've (4) *gone* / *been going* to the local driving school. The instructors are very friendly and it's quite close to my house. But it's rather expensive. I've already (5) *spent* / *been spending* over £500! After the first ten lessons I (6) *took* / *have been taking* my first test. It was a disaster! Of course, I didn't pass. Since then I've been (7) *tried* / *trying* to improve, but it isn't easy at my age. I find it's very difficult to change gears smoothly because of my bad leg – for the last ten years I (8) *am* / *'ve been* suffering from arthritis, which makes my leg stiff. I've (9) *taken* / *been taking* some special vitamins which seem to help – I take two each day. My instructor says I should use an automatic car, but I think I prefer manual ones. Although in fact I've never (10) *driven* / *been driving* an automatic car, so perhaps I should give it a try ...”



40 Present perfect simple or continuous?

1 Differences in use

PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE	PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS
An action that is completed: <i>I've driven an automatic car before.</i>	An activity that is still continuing, or has just ended: <i>I've been driving since nine o'clock.</i>
emphasis on the result of a past action: 	emphasis on the cause of a present result: 
<i>The mechanic has repaired the car.</i> (It's ready for the customer now.)	Why is Caroline dirty? <i>She's been repairing the car.</i>
To answer the questions 'how much?' or 'how many?' <i>We've played six games.</i> <i>Karl has driven 200 miles.</i>	To answer the question 'how long?' <i>We've been playing for three hours.</i> <i>Karl's been driving since nine o'clock.</i>
Time expressions: <i>always, recently, before, ever, already, just, still, yet, for</i> and <i>since</i> <i>I've always lived in that flat.</i> <i>I've lived there since I was born.</i>	Time expressions: <i>for, since</i> (NOT <i>always, yet</i>) <i>I've always been living in that flat.</i> <i>✓ I've been living there for years.</i>

2 State verbs

With state verbs (e.g. *understand, know, be, own*) we use the present perfect simple, not the present perfect continuous:

- ⚠ ~~*I've been knowing Ben since I was six.*~~
 ✓ *I've known Ben since I was six.*

We can use *always* and *never* with these verbs:

*I've **always** liked ice cream. Switzerland has **never** had a king.*
*Have you **always** owned a car?*

State verbs ➤ Unit 29.3

Some verbs (e.g. *live, work, teach, study*) describe an action which continues over a period of time, not a single event. We can use these verbs with *for* or *since* in the present perfect simple or continuous. There's very little difference in meaning:

*'How long **have you lived/have you been living** here?' 'We've **lived/We've been living** in this house **since** we got married.'*

*Alice **has studied/has been studying** maths for three years.*

Practice

1 Choose the correct words in *italics>. In two places both answers are possible.*

3.15 Listen and check.

- 0 Jake doesn't have any family. He's always *lived* / *been living* on his own.
 1 He never answers the phone. I've *called* / *been calling* six times!
 2 Sorry I'm so late. I've *waited* / *been waiting* for a call from the New York office.
 3 Debbie knows Seattle really well. She's *lived* / *been living* there for two years.
 4 I'm afraid the house is a mess. We've *decorated* / *been decorating* it.
 5 Look at the new garden lights. Sam's just *turned* / *been turning* them on.
 6 Carol's an expert on economics. She's *studied* / *been studying* it for years.
 7 Harry's an old friend of mine. I've *known* / *been knowing* him since we were kids.
 8 Marking essays is hard work. I've *marked* / *been marking* twenty this evening.
 9 I'm curious about the food here. I haven't *tried* / *been trying* Mexican food before.
 10 I hate cabbage. I've never *liked* / *been liking* it.

2 Match sentences 1 and 2 with A and B in each pair.

- 0 1 Rick has had a nice time. → A He's been playing in the garden.
 2 Carlo needs a shower. → B He's played in the garden all day.
 1 1 I've just read that detective story. A So I know who the murderer is.
 2 I've been reading that detective story. B I don't know who the murderer is yet.
 2 1 We can start making dinner now. A I've been cleaning the kitchen.
 2 Sorry my clothes are dirty. B I've cleaned the kitchen.
 3 1 Jane's fixed the computer. A You can use it now.
 2 Jane's been fixing the computer. B It's taken her most of the day.
 4 1 Your towels are ready. A I've been washing them.
 2 Your towels are still damp. B I've washed them.
 5 1 The suitcases are empty. A I've been unpacking.
 2 The suitcases are half empty. B I've unpacked.

3 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the conversation with suitable forms of the words in brackets.

3.16 Listen and check.

- ROY You look tired. (0) *Have you been working* (you work) all day?
 BEN Not exactly, I (1) (do) some research on the Internet.
 I (2) (try) to get some information about one of our old friends from college.
 ROY Who?
 BEN Dave Colston. Do you remember him?
 ROY Yes. I (3) (not see) him for years! But what do you want to find out?
 BEN Well. I (4) (just get) an email from Philip Markham. He wants to get in touch with Dave but he doesn't know where he is now. He thinks Dave (5) (live) in the Far East for the last few years.
 ROY Yes. I remember he was always interested in oriental philosophy.
 BEN Exactly. I (6) (look at) six or seven different websites already, but I (7) (not find) much information.
 ROY (8) (you try) that website that reunites old college friends?
 BEN Yes. I (9) (already look at) that one, but he's not on it. I posted a message for some of his other friends on some other websites and I (10) (wait) for a reply. But so far I've heard nothing ...