

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

A

Compare these two situations:



There is paint on Kate's clothes. She **has been painting** her bedroom.

has been painting is the *present perfect continuous*.

We are thinking of the activity. It does not matter whether it has been finished or not. In this example, the activity (painting the bedroom) has not been finished.



The bedroom was green. Now it is yellow. She **has painted** her bedroom.

has painted is the *present perfect simple*.

Here, the important thing is that something has been finished. 'She **has painted**' is a completed action. We are thinking about the *result* of the activity (the painted bedroom), not the activity itself.

B

Compare these examples:

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> My hands are very dirty. I've been repairing my bike. <input type="checkbox"/> Joe has been eating too much recently. He should eat less. <input type="checkbox"/> It's nice to see you again. What have you been doing since we last met? <input type="checkbox"/> Where have you been? Have you been playing tennis? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> My bike is OK again now. I've repaired it. (= I've finished repairing it) <input type="checkbox"/> Somebody has eaten all the chocolates. The box is empty. <input type="checkbox"/> Where's the book I gave you? What have you done with it? <input type="checkbox"/> Have you ever played tennis? |
|--|---|

C

We use the continuous to say *how long* (for something that is still happening):

- ☐ How long **have** you **been reading** that book?
- ☐ Amy is writing emails. She's **been writing** emails all morning.
- ☐ They've **been playing** tennis since 2 o'clock.
- ☐ I'm learning Arabic, but I **haven't been learning** it very long.

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

- ☐ How many pages of that book **have** you **read**?
- ☐ Amy **has sent** lots of emails this morning.
- ☐ They've **played** tennis three times this week.
- ☐ I'm learning Arabic, but I **haven't learnt** very much yet.

D

Some verbs (for example, **know**) are not normally used in continuous forms (**be + -ing**):

- ☐ I've **known** about the problem for a long time. (*not* I've been knowing)
- ☐ How long **have** you **had** that camera? (*not* have you been having)

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

But note that you *can* use **want** and **mean** in the present perfect continuous (**have/has been + -ing**):

- ☐ I've **been meaning** to phone Anna, but I keep forgetting.

Exercises

10.1 Read the situation and complete the sentences. Use the verbs in brackets.

- Tom started reading a book two hours ago. He is still reading it and now he is on page 53.
 He has been reading for two hours. (read)
 He has read 53 pages so far. (read)
- Rachel is from Australia. She is travelling round Europe. She began her trip three months ago.
 She for three months. (travel)
 six countries so far. (visit)
- Patrick is a tennis player. He began playing tennis when he was 10 years old. This year he won the national championship again – for the fourth time.
 the national championship four times. (win)
 since he was ten. (play)
- When they left college, Lisa and Sue started making films together. They still make films.
 They films since they left college. (make)
 five films since they left college. (make)

10.2 Ask questions using the words in brackets. Use the present perfect simple (have/has done) or continuous (have/has been doing).

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

10.3 Put the verb into the present perfect simple or continuous.

- Where have you been? Have you been playing (you / play) tennis?
- Look! (somebody / break) that window.
- You look tired. (you / work) hard?
- ‘..... (you / ever / work) in a factory?’ ‘No, never.’
- Where’s Lisa? Where (she / go)?
- This is a very old book. (I / have) it since I was a child.
- ‘Have you been busy?’ ‘No, (I / watch) TV.’
- My brother is an actor. (he / appear) in several films.
- ‘Sorry I’m late.’ ‘That’s all right. (I / not / wait) long.’
- Are you OK? You look as if (you / cry).
- ‘Is it still raining?’ ‘No, (it / stop).’
- The children are tired now. (they / play) in the garden.
- (I / lose) my phone. (you / see) it?
- (I / read) the book you lent me, but
 (I / not / finish) it yet. It’s really interesting.
- (I / read) the book you lent me, so you can have it back now.