

Present Perfect Continuous and Simple (I have been doing and I have done)

A

Study this example situation:



Ling's clothes are covered with 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 red. 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 the activity itself.

Compare these examples:

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ My hands are very dirty. I've been fixing the car. ■ Joe has been eating too much recently. He should eat less. ■ It's nice to see you again. What have you been doing since the last time we saw you? ■ Where have you been? Have you been playing tennis? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The car is OK again now. I've fixed it. ■ Somebody has eaten all my candy. The box 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 say or ask *how long* (for an activity that is still happening):

- How long **have you been reading** that book?
- Lisa is still writing her report. She's **been writing** it all day.
- They've **been playing** tennis **since 2:00**.
- I'm studying Spanish, but I **haven't been studying** it very long.

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

- How much of that book **have you read**?
- Lisa **has written** 10 pages today.
- They've **played** tennis three times this week.
- I'm studying Spanish, but I **haven't learned** very much yet.

C

Some verbs (for example, **know/like/believe**) are not normally 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. But note that you *can* use **want** and **mean** in the present perfect continuous:

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

11.1 For each situation, write two sentences using the words in parentheses.

- Luis 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.
- Min is from Korea. She is traveling around Asia right now. She began her trip three months ago.
(travel / for three months) She _____
(visit / six countries so far) _____
- Jimmy is a tennis player. He began playing tennis when he was 10 years old. This year he is national champion again – for the fourth time.
(win / the national championships / four times) _____
(play / tennis since he was 10) _____
- When they graduated from college, Lisa and Amy started making movies together. They still make movies.
(make / five movies since they finished college) They _____

(make / movies since they finished college) _____

11.2 For each situation, ask a question using the words in parentheses.

- You have a friend who is studying Arabic. You ask:
(how long / study / Arabic?) How long have you been studying 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 take a trip. You ask:
(how long / save?) _____
(how much money / save?) _____

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

- 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.”
- “Hi, is Sam there?” “No, he _____ (go) for a run.”
- My brother is an actor. _____ (he / appear) in several films.
- “Sorry I’m late.” “That’s all right. _____ (I / not / wait) long.”
- “Is it still raining?” “No, _____ (it / stop).”
- _____ (I / lose) my cell phone. _____
(you / see) it anywhere?
- _____ (I / read) the book you lent me, but _____
_____ (I / not / finish) it yet. It’s very interesting.
- _____ (I / read) the book you lent me, so you can have it back now.