

PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

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FORM

The structure of the present perfect continuous tense is:

subject + auxiliary verb + main verb + -ing
have
has been base+ ing

⇒ has/have + been + present participle

+ You **have been waiting** here for two hours.

? **Have** you **been waiting** here for two hours?

- You **have not been waiting** here for two hours.

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USE: DURATION FROM THE PAST UNTIL NOW

The Present Perfect Continuous is used to show that something started in the past and has continued up until now or has some connection to now.

- They **have been talking** for the last hour.
- She **has been working** at that company for three years.
- What **have** you **been doing** for the last 30 minutes?
- James **has been teaching** at the university since June.
- We **have been waiting** here for over two hours!
- Why **has** Nancy **not been taking** her medicine for the last three days?

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An action that started in the past and is **continuing up to now**:

- I **have been reading** for 2 hours. [I am still reading now.]
- We've **been studying** since 9 o'clock. [We're still studying now.]
- How long **have** you **been learning** English? [You are still learning now.]
- We **have not been smoking**. [And we are not smoking now.]

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An action which has just stopped (though the whole action can be unfinished) and has a result, which we can often see, hear, or feel, in the present (the focus is on the action).

- I'm so tired, I've been studying.
- I've been running, so I'm really hot.
- It's been raining, the pavement is wet.
- I've been reading your book, it's very good.
- I'm tired because I've been running.
- Why is the grass wet? Has it been raining?
- You don't understand because you haven't been listening.

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RECENTLY, LATELY

The Present Perfect Continuous can be also used WITHOUT a duration such as "for two weeks." Without the duration, the tense has a more general meaning of "lately." We often use the words "lately" or "recently" to emphasize this meaning.

- Recently, I have been feeling really tired.
- She has been watching too much television lately.
- Have you been exercising lately?
- Mary has been feeling a little depressed.
- Lisa has not been practicing her English.
- What have you been doing?

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OTHER USAGES

- 1) to emphasise how long something has taken
 - a) I've been trying to start my own business for ages.
 - b) I've been waiting here for ages.

- 2) to indicate that an activity is temporary or incomplete
 - c) I've been staying here while I try to buy a flat.
 - d) I've been living here for a few months now.
(≠ I've lived here all my life!)

- 3) to emphasise the repetition of an activity
 - e) I've been going jogging every night.
 - f) I've been ringing and ringing you!

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WITH FOR AND SINCE

We often use **for** and **since** with the present perfect continuous tense.

- 1) We use **for** to talk about a **period** of time - 5 minutes, 2 weeks, 5 years.
- 2) We use **since** to talk about a **point** in past time - 9 o'clock, 1st January, Monday.
 - a) I have been studying **for** 3 hours.
 - b) I have been watching TV **since** 7pm.
 - c) Maria hasn't been feeling well **for** 2 weeks.
 - d) Maria hasn't been visiting us **since** March.
 - e) John has been playing football **for** a long time.
 - f) John has been living in London **since** he left school.

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NON-CONTINUOUS VERBS-STATIVE VERBS

It is important to remember that non-continuous verbs or stative verbs cannot be used in any continuous tenses. Instead of using Present Perfect Continuous with these verbs, we must use Present Perfect.

- a) Sam **has been having** his car for two years. *Not Correct*
- b) Sam **has had** his car for two years. *Correct*
- c) How long **have you been knowing** Sally? *Not correct*
- d) How long **have you known** Sally? *Correct*

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PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE OR CONTINUOUS?

Both tenses are used to express that an action began in the past and is still going on or has just finished. In many cases, both forms are correct, but there is often a difference in meaning:

We use the *Present Perfect Simple* mainly to express that an action is completed or **to emphasise the result**. We use the *Present Perfect Progressive* to **emphasise the duration or continuous course of an action**.

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1) Result or duration?

Result (what / how much / how often)

- a) I have written 5 letters. / I have been to London twice.

Duration (how long)

- b) I have been writing for an hour.

2) Emphasis on completion or duration?

Emphasis on completion

- c) I have done my homework. (*My homework is completed now.*)

Emphasis on duration

- d) I have been doing my homework. (*That's how I have spent my time.*)

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3) Result or side effect?

desired result

- a) I have washed the car. (*The car is clean now.*)

unwanted side effect

- b) Why are you so wet? - I have been washing the car. (*I became wet when I was washing the car.*)

4) Time + negation: last time or beginning of an action?

since the last time

- c) I haven't played that game for years. (*It's years ago that I last played that game.*)

since the beginning

- d) I haven't been playing that game for an hour, only for 10 minutes. (*It's not even an hour ago that I started to play that game.*)

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5) Permanent or temporary?

If an action is still going on and we want to express that it is a permanent situation, we use the Present Perfect Simple. For temporary situations, we prefer the Present Perfect Progressive. This is not a rule, however, only a tendency.

permanent

a) James has lived in this town for 10 years. (*He is a permanent resident of this town.*)

Temporary

b) James has been living here for a year. (*This situation is only temporary.*)

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Add the missing words.

- 1 It has _____ snowing a lot this week.
- 2 _____ your brother and sister been getting along?
- 3 Rick _____ been studying hard this semester.
- 4 I'm tired because I _____ been working out.
- 5 Julie _____ living in Italy since May.
- 6 How long have you been _____ German?
- 7 We have been watching TV _____ 3 hours.
- 8 You have _____ too hard today.
- 9 Has it _____ raining since you arrived?
- 10 My brother has been travelling _____ he finished school.

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Complete the sentences with the present perfect continuous.

- 1) She (work) here for five years.
- 2) I (study) all day.
- 3) You (eat) a lot recently.
- 4) We (live) in London for six months.
- 5) He (play) football, so he's tired.
- 6) They (learn) English for two years.
- 7) I (cook) so I'm really hot.
- 8) She (go) to the cinema every weekend for years.
- 9) It (rain). The pavement is wet.
- 10) You (sleep) for twelve hours.

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Complete the sentences with the present perfect continuous.

- 11) I (not/work) today.
- 12) You (not/eat) well recently.
- 13) We (not/exercise) enough.
- 14) She (not/study).
- 15) They (not/live) here for very long.
- 16) It (not/snow).
- 17) He (not/play) football for five years.
- 18) We (not/drink) enough water - that's why we feel tired.
- 19) I (not/sleep) I was reading.
- 20) They (not/watch) TV much recently.

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Put the verbs into the correct tense (Present Perfect Simple or Present Perfect Progressive)

- 1) I (play) football for five years.
- 2) My team (win / only) two matches so far.
- 3) The others (be / always) better.
- 4) Are we not there yet? We (walk) for hours.
- 5) But we (cover / only) an area of five miles so far.
- 6) I (finish/just) my homework.
- 7) I (work) on this essay since two o'clock.
- 8) Jane (go out) with Bob for seven years.
- 9) Martin (date) three girls this week.
- 10) How long (wait / you) for us?

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Use the verbs in Present Perfect Progressive, if possible. If it is not possible, use the Present Perfect Simple.

- 1) We (know) them for 15 years.
- 2) They (watch) TV for 3 hours.
- 3) He (have) this car for 20 years.
- 4) We (work) for 7 hours without a break.
- 5) How long (you / learn) English?
- 6) Mr Smith (be) in hospital for 5 days.
- 7) Steven (hear) a mouse squeak all night.
- 8) (you / see) Brona?
- 9) She (prepare) dinner for two hours.
- 10) Don't worry, they (touch / not) your gameboy.

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Put the verbs into the correct tense (Present Perfect Simple or Present Perfect Progressive).

- 1) Why are you out of breath? - I (run).
- 2) The toaster is okay again. Dad (repair) it.
- 3) I am so tired, I (work) all day.
- 4) Your shirt is clean now. Maggie (wash) it.
- 5) I'm afraid, I'm getting a cold. I (walk) home in the rain.
- 6) Your clothes smell awful! (you / smoke) ?
- 7) Peggy is ready for her exam now. I (help) her preparing for it.
- 8) It is dark in here because we (close) the curtains. We want to watch a film and that's better in the dark.
- 9) His voice is gone now because he (shout) all morning.

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Robin: I think the waiter (forget) us. We (wait) here for over half an hour and nobody (take) our order yet.

Michele: I think you're right. He (walk) by us at least twenty times. He probably thinks we (order, already) .

Robin: Look at that couple over there, they (be, only) here for five or ten minutes and they already have their food.

Michele: He must realize we (order, not) yet! We (sit) here for over half an hour staring at him.

Robin: I don't know if he (notice, even) us. He (run) from table to table taking orders and serving food.

Michele: That's true, and he (look, not) in our direction once.

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1. Judy: How long (be) in Canada?
Claude: I (study) here for more than three years.

2. I (have) the same car for more than ten years. I'm thinking about buying a new one.

3. I (love) chocolate since I was a child. You might even call me a "chocoholic."

4. Matt and Sarah (have) some difficulties in their relationship lately, so they (go) to a marriage counselor. I hope they work everything out.

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5. John (work) for the government since he graduated from Harvard University. Until recently, he (enjoy) his work, but now he is talking about retiring.

6. Lately, I (think) about changing my career because I (become) dissatisfied with the conditions at my company.

7. I (see) Judy for more than five years and during that time I (see) many changes in her personality.

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Complete the stories

I've _____ all the meat. What shall I do now?
She's _____ magazines for a collage all morning.
He's _____ in your office since he arrived.
I'm pleased he's got his promotion. He has _____ a long time for it.
He hasn't got much hair. He's _____ it since he was only thirty.
She's _____ her keys. She can't find them anywhere.
He's _____ since he was only ten.
I've never _____ a cigar.
They have never _____ to swim.
They have _____ to drive for a couple of months.

- waited smoked been smoking been waiting learnt cut up
been learning lost been losing been cutting up

1. I'm very hungry. I _____ all day.

- a) didn't eat
- b) haven't ate
- c) haven't eaten
- d) have been eating

2. Their new kitchen looks fantastic. They _____ completely _____ it.

- a) have _____ been redecorating
- b) have _____ redecorated
- c) already _____ redecorated
- d) didn't _____ redecorated

3. Our kitchen's a mess. We _____ any cleaning for weeks.

- a) didn't do
- b) haven't been doing
- c) have done
- d) haven't done

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4. I think they are dating. They _____ a lot of each other recently.

- a) had seen
- b) haven't been seeing
- c) have been seeing
- d) have seen

5. We've discovered this great café and we _____ there a lot.

- a) have been going
- b) have gone
- c) are going
- d) have went

6. How's your Mum? I _____ her for ages.

- a) had seen
- b) haven't seen
- c) haven't been seeing
- d) didn't see

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7. You're covered in paint! What _____ you _____?

- a) have ____ done
- b) were ____ doing
- c) did ____ do
- d) have ____ been doing

8. She's gone to the doctor's. She _____ too well lately.

- a) hasn't felt
- b) hasn't been feeling
- c) has felt
- d) doesn't feel

9. Where have you been? I _____ for ages.

- a) have waited
- b) waited
- c) was waiting
- d) have been waiting

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