

The present perfect continuous tense

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| have/has + been + -ing |
| Use the present perfect continuous : |
| To describe actions and trends that started in the past and continue in the present. We are interested in the activity itself and its duration into the present time. <i>How long have you been working here?</i> <i>I've been writing the report all morning.</i> |
| To talk about the effect of recent events <i>Why are you covered in ink? I've been repairing the photocopier</i> |
| Sometimes either the present perfect simple or the present perfect continuous can be used. <i>I've worked here for five years.</i> <i>I've been working here for five years.</i> |
| It is not used |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For completed actions – compare <i>Interest rates have reached 5%. (a completed action)</i> <i>Interest rates have been going up all year. (and have not stopped going up)</i>• To specifically quantify an action, e.g. talk about the number of times it happened. Use the present perfect simple instead - compare: <i>He's been talking on the phone all morning. (and he's still talking now)</i> <i>He's made at least 10 phone calls this morning.</i> |

A Underline the correct form in italics.

1. I *have written/been writing* e-mails all morning – i have written/been writing 15 so far.
2. We *have received/been receiving* no reply to our request for information
3. He *has worked/been working* too hard ; that's why he's always so tired.
4. He *has worked/been working* for several different companies. He has *worked/been working* for his current company for three months.
5. They *have known/been knowing* each other since they were at school together.

B Read these extracts from emails and letters. Put the verbs in brackets into the past simple, present perfect or present perfect continuous.

1. I hear you have problems with the new system. Sorry about this. I _____ (speak) to the Systems Manager and she _____ (promise) to get back to you by lunchtime. She also _____ (ask) me if you could her the log file.
2. Thanks for buying me lunch yesterday. Great to see you. It made a nice change as I _____ (be) so busy lately. By the way, I _____ (forget) to ask you if you could give me your boss's email address. We _____ (work) on a project recently which I think she would be interested in. Anyway, take care and speak to you soon.
3. We note form our records that we still _____ (not receive) any payment for our invoice dated July 21st, reference number TN4927. I would like to point out that this is the third time we _____ (request) payment. I would be grateful if you would contact me about this as a matter of urgency. I _____ (try) to ring you sev eral times and I _____ (leave) several messages with your secretary. I enclose a further copy of our invoice.

C. For a and b, choose the correct answer. For c and d, say which part in italics is not correct and why.

a. She's been living here for six months.

When did she arrive?

A six months ago B we don't know

b. I've been reading a computer manual.

Does this mean that I have completed the manual?

A yes B probably not

c. I've been having *problems/a car since June*.

d. He's been smoking *all morning/50 cigarettes this morning*.

D Match the definitions of use (1-4) with the examples of use (a-d)

1. **An activity starting in the past and continuing to the present....**
2. **A routine action....**
3. **An activity in the progress in the present...**
4. **An action at some time in the past with an effect in the present...**

- a. *I arrange all meetings with clients.*
- b. *He has worked with some major clients.*
- c. *She is currently working at the San Francisco office.*
- d. *They've been looking for a replacement.*

Identify the tenses in a-d.

Compare:

Present Continuous

House prices are rising at the moment, so it's a good time to sell.

(The focus is on now – it's not important when the situation began.)

Present Perfect Continuous

House prices have been rising steadily since January – if you wait a bit longer you might get a better price.

(The focus is on an incomplete action – which started at a certain point in the past and may carry on into the future.)

Present Perfect

House prices have risen dramatically and my flat has doubled in value.

(the focus is on the result – the increase in value.)

E Discuss the difference in meaning between:

- *What do you do?*
- *What are you doing?*
- *What do you think?*
- *What are you thinking?*
- *You're unreasonable.*
- *You're being unreasonable.*
- *We have lost market share.*
- *We've been losing market share.*

F Complete the sentences by choosing the correct form in italics.

1. Your advertising plan *sounds/is sounding* interesting.
2. High wages generally *cause/are causing* inflation.
3. *They've been interviewing/ interviewed* new copywriters all morning.
4. Amy usually *is working/works* at the Dublin office, but she *is working/works* in Barcelona for a few months.
5. How long *has she written/been writing* the report?
6. I *don't know/'m not knowing* what these survey results *mean/are meaning*.
7. I can't come to Friday's meeting, *I go/am going* to Rome.
8. How often *have you visited/been visiting* the Peruvian market?

G Underline the correct form in the sentences below and ask and answer the question with a partner.

1. How long *are you living/have you been living* in your current accommodation?
2. How many projects *have you worked/have you been working* on in your present job? What project *are you working/have you been working* on now?
3. What *have you done/have you been doing* in your career that you are really proud of?
4. How long *have you learnt/have you been learning* English? *Have you taken/have you been taking* any exams or qualifications in English?
5. How much *has your job changed/has your job been changing* since you started working at your present company? *Has it got/has it been getting* easier or more challenging?