

Present Perfect Continuous: Process vs. Result

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: have/has been + -ing, Recently stopped activities, Ongoing activities leading to a result, Contractions (I've been, he's been), How long questions, Usage of 'for' and 'since', Duration vs. point in time, Activities still happening, Continuous for the process/activity, Simple for the completed result

1. The Present Perfect Continuous

We use this tense to talk about actions that started in the past and are still happening now, or have just finished with a visible result or feeling in the present. It emphasizes the **activity** or the **duration**.

Form: Subject + have/has + been + verb-ing

Type	Form	Example
(+) Affirmative	I/You/We/They have been working He/She/It has been working	<i>I've been working all day.</i> <i>She's been crying.</i>
(-) Negative	I/You/We/They haven't been working He/She/It hasn't been working	<i>We haven't been sleeping well.</i> <i>He hasn't been listening.</i>
(?) Question	Have I/you/we/they been working? Has he/she/it been working?	<i>Have you been waiting long?</i> <i>What has she been doing?</i>

2. Usage: Duration (For & Since)

We often use **How long...?**, **for**, and **since** with this tense to emphasize time.

- **How long** have you been waiting?
- I've been learning English **for** six years. (Duration)
- She has been living here **since** 2010. (Starting point)

3. Continuous (Process) vs. Simple (Result & Quantity)

This is the most critical distinction.

A. The Process vs. The Result

- **Present Perfect Continuous (Focus on Activity/Process):** The action might be unfinished or repeated. We are interested in the action itself.
 - *I've been painting the room.* (It smells like paint, I might not be finished).
 - *Your hands are dirty! What have you been doing?* (Focus on the activity causing the dirt).
- **Present Perfect Simple (Focus on Result/Completion):** The action is finished. We are interested in the result.
 - *I've painted the room.* (It is finished. Look, it's blue now!)

B. "How Long" vs. "How Many" (Quantifying)

- Use **Continuous** for "How long": *She has been writing emails for two hours.*
- Use **Simple** for "How many/much" (Quantifying): *She has written ten emails.* (You cannot say "She has been writing ten emails").

C. Stative Verbs

Verbs that describe states (know, believe, like, love, have/possess) usually take the **Simple** form, even if the action started in the past and continues now.

- *I **have known** him for years.* (NOT: I have been knowing him).
- *She **has had** this car since 2015.* (NOT: She has been having this car).

Practice Exercises

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb: Present Perfect Continuous or Present Perfect Simple.

Look for clues: Is it a state? Is it a quantity (how many)? Is it a continuous process?

1. Look at the kitchen! It is a mess. What _____ (you/cook)?
2. I _____ (write) emails all morning, but I haven't finished yet.
3. She _____ (write) five emails so far today.
4. Sorry I'm late. _____ (you/wait) long?
5. I _____ (know) my best friend since we were children.
6. He _____ (not/eat) anything today because he is sick.
7. We _____ (walk) for three hours. Can we have a rest now?
8. How many times _____ (she/visit) New York?
9. I'm exhausted. I _____ (work) in the garden all day.
10. _____ (you/finish) your homework yet?
11. My eyes are red because I _____ (cut) onions.
12. They _____ (not/play) football recently because of the bad weather.
13. He _____ (love) classical music since he was a teenager.
14. How long _____ (they/learn) Japanese?
15. Someone _____ (eat) my cookies! The packet is empty.

Answer Key

1. **have you been cooking** (Focus on activity/evidence in the present)
2. **have been writing** (Continuous activity/process, unfinished)
3. **has written** (Quantity/Result - "five emails")
4. **Have you been waiting** (Duration - "long")
5. **have known** (Stative verb)
6. **hasn't eaten** (Result/fact - usually simple for negatives unless emphasising a continuous lack of action)
7. **have been walking** (Focus on the activity causing tiredness)
8. **has she visited** (Quantity - "How many times")
9. **have been working** (Focus on activity causing exhaustion)
10. **Have you finished** (Result/Completion)
11. **have been cutting** (Focus on activity causing the red eyes - recently stopped)
12. **haven't been playing** (Repeated activity stopped recently)
13. **has loved** (Stative verb)
14. **have they been learning** (Focus on duration - "How long")
15. **has eaten** (Result - the packet is empty)