

# Present Perfect Simple or Continuous

Compare the Present Perfect Simple and Present Perfect Continuous:

- 1 We use the Present Perfect Simple (**have painted**) to talk about a past activity that is now completed:

*We've painted the rooms.* (= The rooms are now painted.)

*Anna's mended her bike.* (= She can ride it now.)

We use the Present Perfect Continuous (**have been painting**) to emphasize the activity itself, which may or may not be completed:

*We've been painting the flat. That's why it smells.*

*We still have three rooms to paint.*

*Anna's hands are dirty because she's been mending her bike.*

- 2 We use the Present Perfect Simple to ask and answer **How many?** and **How much?**:

A: *How many rooms have you painted?*

B: *We've painted three of them.*

We usually use the Present Perfect Continuous to ask **How long?**, and with **since** and **for**:

*I have been travelling for six months.*

A: *How long have you been waiting? Have you been queuing for a long time?*

B: *Yes, I've been waiting since two o'clock.*

For more details about **How long?**, **How many?** and **How much?** see Unit 32.

- 3 Note that we usually use the Present Perfect Simple (not the Continuous):

► to talk about short actions with **have**, **stop**, **break**, etc.

*Tony has had an accident on his bike.*

► with verbs of thinking (e.g. **know**, **decide**, **forget**, **notice**):

*I'm sorry. I've forgotten your name.*

► to talk about the last time that something happened:

*I haven't eaten meat for two years.*

(= *I last ate meat two years ago.*)

Note that we can use the Present Perfect Simple or the Continuous with **work**, **teach**, and **live**, with no difference in meaning:

*I have taught here for two years.*

OR *I have been teaching here for two years.*

## Practice

- A Write out the sentences in brackets ( ). Use the Present Perfect Simple (e.g. *I have done*).

- He's late again. (How many times/he/arrive/late this month?)

.....  
*How many times has he arrived late this month?*

- 1 What a good week! (We/sell/much more than we expected.)

.....

- 2 (How much money/you/spend/this week?)

.....

- 3 (How many people/Jane/invite/to her party?)

.....

Now use the Present Perfect Continuous (*I have been doing*).

- 4 It's still raining. (It/rain/for hours.)

.....

- 5 That noise is awful. (They/drill/holes in the wall all morning.)

.....

- 6 Are you still here? (How long/you/sit/here?)

.....

**B** Five friends have just finished some jobs. Look at the table.

|        | ACTIVITY           | NOW               |
|--------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Neil   | sweep the floors   | he is sweating    |
| Rachel | cut the grass      | she is tired      |
| Paul   | do the washing-up  | he has soft hands |
| Carol  | peel the onions    | she has red eyes  |
| Tim    | defrost the fridge | he has cold hands |

Complete the dialogues from this information. Use the Present Perfect Simple or the Present Perfect Continuous.

- Neil, why are you sweating? ~ Because I have been sweeping the floors.
- Is the lawn finished? ~ Yes, Rachel has cut the grass.
- 1 Paul, why are your hands so soft? ~ Because I .....
- 2 Are the onions ready for the pan? ~ Yes, Carol ..... them.
- 3 Rachel, you look tired. ~ Yes, I .....
- 4 Tim, your hands are very cold. ~ Yes, I .....
- 5 Are the floors clean? ~ Yes, Neil ..... them.
- 6 Why are your eyes red, Carol? ~ Because I .....
- 7 Are the plates clean? ~ Yes, Paul .....
- 8 Is the fridge all right now? ~ Yes, Tim .....

**C** Put the verbs in brackets ( ) into the gaps in the right form. Use the Present Perfect Simple or the Present Perfect Continuous.

- Ellen: Where are you and your family going to live?
- Ian: Well, we've been talking ..... (talk) about that for weeks, but we haven't decided ..... (decide) anything yet.
- 1 Tina: Excuse me. Have you ..... (stand) in this queue for a long time?
- Larry: Yes, I've ..... (queue) for almost an hour.
- 2 Sara: Why are you crying?
- Joe: Because my brother has ..... (have) an accident. He's ..... (break) both his legs.
- 3 Susan: Excuse me. Has someone ..... (leave) this bag here?
- Wally: I don't know. I've ..... (sit) here all afternoon, but I haven't ..... (notice) it until now.