



I'd been working as a truck driver before I became a builder in 1989.

I was building houses for 10 years.

Since 1999, I've been working as a car mechanic.

I'll be retiring next month and I'm planning to travel round the world on my motorbike!

Presentation

Use the continuous aspect to describe actions that happen over a period of time. They are often temporary or incomplete, and in some cases are repeated. We don't normally use the continuous aspect with stative verbs (e.g. *belong*, *prefer* and *seem*): **Does this jacket *belong* to you?** (not *Is this jacket *belonging* to you?*)

Present continuous

Use the present continuous to talk about:

- an action in progress at the time of speaking: *I'm just finishing some work – I'll call you back later.*
- an action around the time of speaking: *They're trying to find a new house.*
- a current trend: *Inflation is going up again.*
- a situation which happens regularly and is irritating, especially with the adverb *always*: *My father is always asking me to clean my room.*

Present perfect continuous

Use the present perfect continuous to talk about:

- an action that started in the past and is still continuing: *I've been revising my English for over an hour.*
- an action that was repeated in the past and continues to be repeated now: *We've been going to the same café for years.*
- a continuous past action that has an effect on the present: *I'm hungry because I've been working so hard.*

Past continuous

Use the past continuous to talk about:

- an action that was the background to another more important event in the past. The background action may continue after the more important event, or be interrupted by it: *He was working in a fast food restaurant when he met his future wife.*

Past perfect continuous

Use the past perfect continuous to talk about:

- something that was in progress up to a point in the past: *She'd been looking for a new job for six months when the offer came.*
- an action that was repeated up to a point in the past: *I'd been telling them to fix the car but they never listened.*

Future continuous

Use the future continuous to talk about:

- something we expect to be happening at a particular time in the future: *This time next week, we'll be moving house.*
- something we expect to be repeated around a particular time in the future: *I'll be doing yoga every Thursday evening.*
- to make a guess or prediction about an action in progress now: *They'll probably be leaving right now.*

Exercises

1 Choose the correct ending for the sentences.

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|---|--|
| 1 They'll be sending the packet | 4 When I was a teenager, |
| a in this afternoon's post. | a I was playing video games all the time. |
| b at the moment. | b I used to play video games all the time. |
| 2 He's always asking me for the answers | 5 I've been standing here |
| a right now. | a for over an hour. |
| b and it's so irritating! | b when the bus arrived. |
| 3 The robber had been trying to open the safe | |
| a when the police arrived. | |
| b for the last two hours. | |

2 Complete the sentences using an appropriate continuous form of the verb in brackets. Two answers are possible in one question.

- I ¹ *was speaking* to someone at the moment. I'll call you back in five minutes. (speak)
- Currently, prices ² a great deal. It's very unpredictable. (fluctuate)
- Where have you been? We ³ for you for over half an hour! (wait)
- They ⁴ to move abroad when Jill was offered a new job. (plan)
- This time next month, I ⁵ a new life in San Francisco. (start)
- I'm not exactly sure where he is, but at this time of day he ⁶ home. (probably / cycle)
- My daughter ⁷ her clothes lying around the house for me to pick up! (always / leave)
- He ⁸ down the street when a child ran out in front of him. (drive)
- The teacher ⁹ something to the class when the fire alarm went off. (explain)
- A: Why are you covered in red paint?
B: Me and the kids ¹⁰ their bedrooms (paint)

3 Choose the correct verb.

We ¹ *have been working* / *'d been working* for the same company for a couple of months when I first saw her. However, it was ages before I ² *found* / *was finding* the courage to speak to her. It was while we ³ *have been both doing* / *were both doing* a training course together that I finally started chatting to her. It was the end of the first day and everyone in the group ⁴ *talked* / *was talking* about how interesting the day ⁵ *had been* / *was being*. I ⁶ *hadn't noticed* / *hadn't been noticing* she was standing right behind me. I stepped back and knocked her glass of water all over her. Fortunately, she laughed about it and so we ⁷ *started* / *were starting* talking. She told me she ⁸ *is moving* / *was moving* into a new house round the corner from me, so I offered to help her. We ⁹ *have been seeing* / *'ll be seeing* a lot of each other ever since that moment and we ¹⁰ *have been getting* / *'ll be getting* married next month.

4 Complete these sentences so they are true for you.

- I'm currently working on _____.
- My teacher/boss is always asking me to _____.
- I've been studying _____ for/since _____.
- A few years ago, I'd been hoping to _____.
- I was _____ when _____.
- By this time next year, I'll be _____.