



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.

1 They'll be sending the packet
 a in this afternoon's post.
 b at the moment.

2 He's always asking me for the answers
 a right now.
 b and it's so irritating!

3 The robber had been trying to open the safe
 a when the police arrived.
 b for the last two hours.

4 When I was a teenager,
 a I was playing video games all the time.
 b I used to play video games all the time.

5 I've been standing here
 a for over an hour.
 b when the bus arrived.

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

1 I'm speaking to someone at the moment. I'll call you back in five minutes. (speak)

2 Currently, prices a great deal. It's very unpredictable. (fluctuate)

3 Where have you been? We for you for over half an hour! (wait)

4 They to move abroad when Jill was offered a new job. (plan)

5 This time next month, I a new life in San Francisco. (start)

6 I'm not exactly sure where he is, but at this time of day he home. (probably / cycle)

7 My daughter her clothes lying around the house for me to pick up! (always / leave)

8 He down the street when a child ran out in front of him. (drive)

9 The teacher something to the class when the fire alarm went off. (explain)

10 A: Why are you covered in red paint?
 B: Me and the kids their bedrooms (paint)

3 Choose the correct verb.

We ¹'ve been working / ²'d been working for the same company for a couple of months when I first saw her. However, it was ages before I ³found / ⁴was finding the courage to speak to her. It was while we ⁵'ve been both doing / ⁶were 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 ⁷talked / ⁸was talking about how interesting the day ⁹had been / ¹⁰was being. I ¹¹hadn't noticed / ¹²hadn'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 ¹³started / ¹⁴were starting talking. She told me she ¹⁵is moving / ¹⁶was moving into a new house round the corner from me, so I offered to help her. We ¹⁷'ve been seeing / ¹⁸'ll be seeing a lot of each other ever since that moment and we ¹⁹'ve been getting / ²⁰'ll be getting married next month.

4 Complete these sentences so they are true for you.

1 I'm currently working on

2 My teacher/boss is always asking me to

3 I've been studying for/since

4 A few years ago, I'd been hoping to

5 I was when

6 By this time next year, I'll be