

Present perfect 1 (I have done)

Study this example situation:



Tom is looking for his key. He can't find it.
He **has lost** his key.

He **has lost** his key = He lost it recently, and he still doesn't have it.

Have/has lost is the *present perfect simple*:

I/we/they/you	have	(= I've etc.)	finished lost done been etc.
he/she/it	has	(= he's etc.)	

The present perfect simple is **have/has + past participle**. The past participle often ends in **-ed** (finished/decided etc.), but many important verbs are *irregular* (lost/done/written etc.).

For a list of irregular verbs, see Appendix 1.

When we say that 'something **has happened**', this is usually new information:

- ☐ Ow! I've cut my finger.
- ☐ The road is closed. There's **been** (there **has been**) an accident.
- ☐ (from the news) Police **have arrested** two men in connection with the robbery.

When we use the present perfect, there is a connection with *now*. The action in the past has a result *now*:

- ☐ 'Where's your key?' 'I don't know. I've **lost** it.' (= I don't have it *now*)
- ☐ He told me his name, but I've **forgotten** it. (= I can't remember it *now*)
- ☐ 'Is Sally here?' 'No, she's **gone** out.' (= she is out *now*)
- ☐ I can't find my bag. **Have you seen** it? (= Do you know where it is *now*?)

You can use the present perfect with **just**, **already** and **yet**.

Just = a short time ago:

- ☐ 'Are you hungry?' 'No, I've **just had** lunch.'
- ☐ Hello. **Have you just arrived**?

We use **already** to say that something happened sooner than expected:

- ☐ 'Don't forget to send the letter.' 'I've **already sent** it.'
- ☐ 'What time is Mark leaving?' 'He's **already gone**.'

Yet = until now. **Yet** shows that the speaker is expecting something to happen. Use **yet** only in questions and negative sentences:

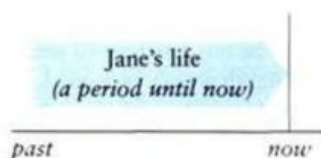
- ☐ **Has it stopped** raining **yet**?
- ☐ I've written the letter, but I **haven't sent** it **yet**.

Note the difference between **gone (to)** and **been (to)**:

- ☐ Jim is on holiday. He **has gone** to Italy. (= he is there now or on his way there)
- ☐ Jane is back home now. She **has been** to Italy. (= she has now come back)

Study this example conversation:

DAVE: Have you travelled a lot, Jane?
 JANE: Yes, I've been to lots of places.
 DAVE: Really? Have you ever been to China?
 JANE: Yes, I've been to China twice.
 DAVE: What about India?
 JANE: No, I haven't been to India.



When we talk about a period of time that continues from the past until now, we use the *present perfect* (have been / have travelled etc.). Here, Dave and Jane are talking about the places Jane has visited in her life (which is a period that continues until now).

Some more examples:

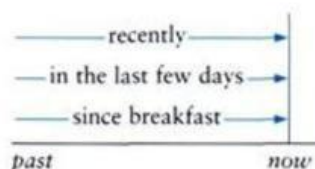
- ☐ Have you ever eaten caviar? (in your life)
- ☐ We've never had a car.
- ☐ 'Have you read *Hamlet*?' 'No, I haven't read any of Shakespeare's plays.'
- ☐ Susan really loves that film. She's seen it eight times!
- ☐ What a boring film! It's the most boring film I've ever seen.

Been (to) = visited:

- ☐ I've never been to China. Have you been there?

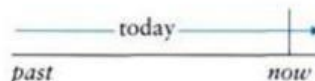
In the following examples too, the speakers are talking about a period that continues until now (recently / in the last few days / so far / since breakfast etc.):

- ☐ Have you heard from Brian recently?
- ☐ I've met a lot of people in the last few days.
- ☐ Everything is going well. We haven't had any problems so far.
- ☐ I'm hungry. I haven't eaten anything since breakfast. (= from breakfast until now)
- ☐ It's good to see you again. We haven't seen each other for a long time.



We use the present perfect with today / this evening / this year etc. when these periods are not finished at the time of speaking (see also Unit 14B):

- ☐ I've drunk four cups of coffee today.
- ☐ Have you had a holiday this year (yet)?
- ☐ I haven't seen Tom this morning. Have you?
- ☐ Rob hasn't studied very hard this term.



We say: It's the (first) time something has happened. For example:

- ☐ Don is having a driving lesson. It's his first one. It's the first time he has driven a car. (not drives)
- or He has never driven a car before.
- ☐ Sarah has lost her passport again. This is the second time this has happened. (not happens)
- ☐ Bill is phoning his girlfriend again. That's the third time he's phoned her this evening.



Present perfect continuous (I have been doing)

It has been raining

Study this example situation:



Is it raining?

No, but the ground is wet.

It has been raining.

Have/has been -ing is the *present perfect continuous*:

I/we/they/you	have	(= I've etc.)	been	doing
he/she/it	has	(= he's etc.)		waiting playing etc.

We use the present perfect continuous for an activity that has recently stopped or just stopped.

There is a connection with *now*:

- ☐ You're out of breath. **Have you been running?** (= you're out of breath *now*)
- ☐ Paul is very tired. **He's been working** very hard. (= he's tired *now*)
- ☐ Why are your clothes so dirty? What **have you been doing?**
- ☐ I've **been talking** to Amanda about the problem and she agrees with me.
- ☐ Where have you been? I've **been looking** for you everywhere.

It has been raining for two hours.

Study this example situation:



It began raining two hours ago and it is still raining.

How long **has it been raining?**

It **has been raining** for two hours.

We use the present perfect continuous in this way with *how long*, *for ...* and *since ...*. The activity is still happening (as in this example) or has just stopped.

- ☐ **How long have you been learning** English? (= you're still learning English)
- ☐ Tim is still watching television. **He's been watching** television all day.
- ☐ Where have you been? I've **been looking** for you for the last half hour.
- ☐ Chris **hasn't been feeling** well recently.

You can use the present perfect continuous for actions repeated over a period of time:

- ☐ Debbie is a very good tennis player. **She's been playing** since she was eight.
- ☐ Every morning they meet in the same café. **They've been going** there for years.

Compare I am doing (see Unit 1) and I have been doing:

I am doing
present continuous

now

- ☐ Don't disturb me **now**. I'm working.
- ☐ We need an umbrella. **It's raining**.
- ☐ Hurry up! We're **waiting**.

I have been doing
present perfect continuous

now

- ☐ I've **been working** hard. Now I'm going to have a break.
- ☐ The ground is wet. **It's been raining**.
- ☐ We've **been waiting** for an hour.

Present perfect continuous and simple (I have been doing and I have done)

Study this example situation:



Kate's clothes are covered in paint.
She **has been painting** the ceiling.

Has been painting is the *present perfect continuous*.

We are interested in the activity. It does not matter whether something has been finished or not. In this example, the activity (painting the ceiling) has not been finished.



The ceiling was white. Now it is red.
She **has painted** the ceiling.

Has painted is the *present perfect simple*.

Here, the important thing is that something has been finished. **Has painted** is a completed action. We are interested in the result of the activity (the painted ceiling), not the activity itself.

Compare these examples:

- ☐ My hands are very dirty. I've **been repairing** the car.
- ☐ Joe **has been eating** too much recently. He should eat less.
- ☐ It's nice to see you again. What **have you been doing** since we last met?
- ☐ Where have you been? **Have you been playing** tennis?

- ☐ The car is OK again now. I've **repaired** it.
- ☐ Somebody **has eaten** all my chocolates. The box is empty.
- ☐ Where's the book I gave you? What **have you done** with it?
- ☐ **Have you ever played** tennis?

We use the continuous to say *how long* (for an activity that is still happening):

- ☐ How long **have you been reading** that book?
- ☐ Lisa is still writing letters. She's **been writing** letters all day.
- ☐ They've **been playing** tennis since 2 o'clock.
- ☐ I'm learning Spanish, but I **haven't been learning** it very long.

We use the simple to say *how much, how many* or *how many times* (for completed actions):

- ☐ How much of that book **have you read**?
- ☐ Lisa **has written** ten letters today.
- ☐ They've **played** tennis three times this week.
- ☐ I'm learning Spanish, but I **haven't learnt** very much yet.

Some verbs (for example, **know/like/believe**) are not normally used in the continuous:

- ☐ I've **known** about it for a long time. (*not* I've been knowing)

For a list of these verbs, see Unit 4A. But note that you *can* use **want** and **mean** in the present perfect continuous:

- ☐ I've **been meaning** to phone Jane, but I keep forgetting.

How long have you (been) ... ?

Study this example situation:



Dan and Jenny are married. They got married exactly 20 years ago, so today is their 20th wedding anniversary. They **have been married for 20 years.**

We say: They are married. (*present*)

but How long have they **been married?** (*present perfect*)

(*not* How long are they married?)

They **have been married for 20 years.**

(*not* They are married for 20 years)

We use the *present perfect* to talk about something that began in the past and still continues now. Compare the *present* and the *present perfect*:

☐ Bill is in hospital.

but He **has been** in hospital since Monday.

(*not* Bill is in hospital since Monday)

☐ Do you know each other well?

but Have you **known** each other for a long time?

(*not* Do you know)

☐ She's waiting for somebody.

but She's **been waiting** all morning.

☐ Do they have a car?

but How long have they **had** their car?

present

present perfect

now

I have known/had/lived etc. is the *present perfect simple*.

I have been learning / been waiting / been doing etc. is the *present perfect continuous*.

When we ask or say 'how long', the continuous is more usual (see Unit 10):

☐ I've **been learning** English for six months.

☐ It's **been raining** since lunchtime.

☐ Richard **has been doing** the same job for 20 years.

☐ 'How long have you **been driving?**' 'Since I was 17.'

Some verbs (for example, know/like/believe) are not normally used in the continuous:

☐ How long **have you known** Jane? (*not* have you been knowing)

☐ I've **had** a pain in my stomach all day. (*not* I've been having)

See also Units 4A and 10C. For have, see Unit 17.

You can use either the present perfect continuous or simple with live and work:

☐ Julia **has been living** / **has lived** in Paris for a long time.

☐ How long **have you been working** / **have you worked** here?

But we use the simple (I've lived / I've done etc.) with **always**:

☐ I've **always lived** in the country. (*not* always been living)

We say 'I haven't done something since/for ...' (*present perfect simple*):

☐ I **haven't seen** Tom since Monday. (= Monday was the last time I saw him)

☐ Sue **hasn't phoned** for ages. (= the last time she phoned was ages ago)

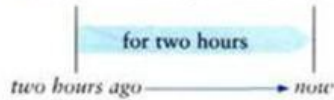
For and since

When ... ? and How long ... ?

We use **for** and **since** to say how long something has been happening.

We use **for** + a period of time (two hours, six weeks etc.):

- ☐ I've been waiting **for two hours**.

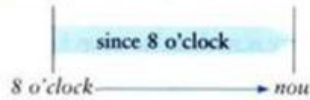


	for	
two hours	a long time	a week
20 minutes	six months	ages
five days	50 years	years

- ☐ Sally has been working here **for six months**. (*not since six months*)
- ☐ I haven't seen Tom **for three days**. (*not since three days*)

We use **since** + the start of a period (8 o'clock, Monday, 1999 etc.):

- ☐ I've been waiting **since 8 o'clock**.



	since	
8 o'clock	April	lunchtime
Monday	1985	we arrived
12 May	Christmas	I got up

- ☐ Sally has been working here **since April**. (= from April until now)
- ☐ I haven't seen Tom **since Monday**. (= from Monday until now)

It is possible to leave out **for** (but not usually in negative sentences):

- ☐ They've been married (for) **ten years**. (with or without **for**)
- ☐ They **haven't** had a holiday **for** ten years. (you must use **for**)

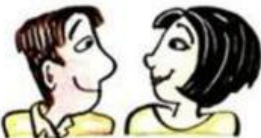
We do **not** use **for** + all ... (all day / all my life etc.):

- ☐ I've lived here **all my life**. (*not for all my life*)

Compare **when ... ?** (+ *past simple*) and **how long ... ?** (+ *present perfect*):



- A: When did it start raining?
 B: It started raining **an hour ago / at 1 o'clock**.
 A: How long has it been raining?
 B: It's been raining **for an hour / since 1 o'clock**.



- A: When did Joe and Carol first meet?
 B: They first met **a long time ago, when they were at school**.
 A: How long have they known each other?
 B: They've known each other **for a long time, since they were at school**.

We say 'It's (a long time / two years etc.) **since** something happened':

- ☐ It's **two years since** I last saw Joe. (= I **haven't** seen Joe for two years)
- ☐ It's **ages since** we went to the cinema. (= We **haven't been** to the cinema for ages)

You can ask 'How long is it **since** ... ?':

- ☐ How long is it **since** you last saw Joe? (= When did you last see Joe?)
- ☐ How long is it **since** Mrs Hill died? (= When did Mrs Hill die?)

You can also say 'It's been (= It has been) ... **since** ...':

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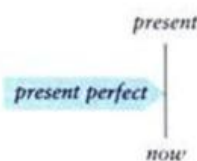
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