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?)
.....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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.

LIVEWORKSHEETS