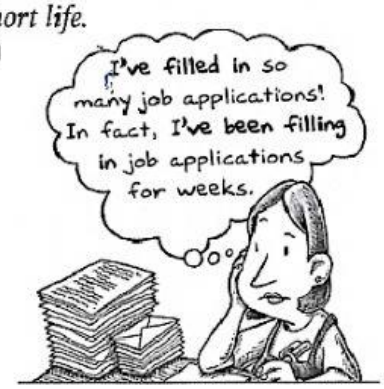
Past simple, present perfect simple, present perfect continuous

Past simple	Present perfect simple
Form	
Affirmative: *They **went out** on Saturday.* **Question:** *Did you **like** the film?* **Negative:** *We **didn't see** Terry last night.*	**Affirmative:** *I've **seen** this film.* **Question:** *Have you **heard** from Jim recently?* **Negative:** *She **hasn't phoned** yet.*
Use	
We use the past simple: • for past (finished) actions, often with time words like *a year ago, last Sunday, in 2010, yesterday*, etc.: *The first modern Olympics **took** place in Athens more than a hundred years ago.* *They **arrived** in Spain **yesterday**.* • for past habits or states: *He always **caught** the same train.* *Long ago, they **built** most houses out of wood.* • for past states, events or actions that lasted for a period of time in the past: *We **were** neighbours for twenty-five years.*	**We use the present perfect:** • for actions that happened at an unspecified time in the past: *They **have arrived** in Spain.* • for past actions that have a result which is obvious or important in the present: *They **have polluted** the river. (= And now the fish are dead.)* *You've **spilt** the coffee all over my trousers! (= And now they're ruined.)* • for recently completed actions, often with *just*: *The film's **just started**.* • to refer to a period of time that has not finished yet. *We've **built** twenty schools this year. (= It is still this year.)* • for general experiences, often with *before, ever* and *never*. *Have you **ever seen** an elephant?* *We've **never been** to Australia.* *She's **never flown** before.* • for actions, events or situations that began in the past and continue in the present, often with *for* and *since*: *They **have lived** here **for** six years. (= They still live here.)* *Mr Edwards **has worked** here **since** 2009. (= He still works here.)* • with the following words: *already, yet, recently, often, still*: *The rain **has already destroyed** the crops.* *We **still haven't discovered** life on other planets.* *They **haven't finished** the project yet.*

Past simple or present perfect simple?

- To talk about a period of time that has finished, we use the past simple. To talk about a period of time that has not yet finished, we use the present perfect simple. Compare:
  *I **had** two sandwiches this morning.*
  (= It is now afternoon or evening.)
  *I've **had** two sandwiches this morning.*
  (= It is still morning.)
- The choice between the past simple and the present perfect simple depends on whether the action links the past with the present. Compare:
  *He **did** a lot in his short life.*
  (= He is dead.)
  *He **has done** a lot in his short life.*
  (= He is alive and young.)



Present perfect continuous

Form

Affirmative: *It **has been raining** since Monday.*
Question: *How long **have you been waiting**?*
Negative: *I **haven't been sleeping** well lately.*

Use

- We use the present perfect continuous to talk about actions that started in the past and continue up to the moment of speaking. We use it especially when we are interested in the duration of the action:
  ***I've been waiting** for a whole hour!*
- Notice the difference between the present perfect simple and the present perfect continuous:
  ***I've read** this book.* (= I have finished it. The focus here is on the fact that the action is complete.)
  ***I've been reading** a book about life on other planets.* (= I haven't finished it yet. The focus here is on the fact that the action is incomplete.)

PRACTICE

1 Complete the article. Use the past simple or present perfect simple of the verbs in brackets.

MACHU PICCHU

We (0)have known (know) about Machu Picchu for over a century now. Archaeologists (1)..... (discover) this ancient Inca site in 1911. They (2)..... (write) books and newspaper articles about their discovery, so people all over the world (3)..... (read) about the site and (4)..... (want) to see it for themselves. The first tourists (5)..... (start) to arrive in the 1960s. Now, more than half a century later, millions of visitors (6)..... (be) to Machu Picchu. Tourists from all over the world (7)..... (see) this marvellous Inca city with their own eyes.

In recent years, Machu Picchu (8)..... (become) one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world. Luxury hotels have been built not far from the site, while in the late 1990s, the Peruvian government (9)..... (allow) the construction of a cable car for visitors. However, all this (10)..... (do) a lot of harm to the site. It (11)..... (pollute) the atmosphere and caused noise pollution around the ancient city. In an effort to protect the site, UNESCO (12)..... (make) Machu Picchu a World Heritage site in 1983.

2 Read the sentences from a letter of application and choose the correct answer.

0 I am writing in connection with the advertisement which *appeared / has appeared* in *Career* online magazine on 3 December.

1 I *originally studied / have originally studied* Mechanical Engineering at university and I *graduated / have been graduating* with a first class degree.

2 I *now completed / have now completed* a postgraduate degree in Business and Administration.

3 I *have tried / have been trying* to find a permanent job for months.

4 I *worked / have worked* for several companies on a temporary basis till now.

5 In my first job, I *was / have been* responsible for marketing.

6 I *applied / have applied* for several posts this year.

7 However, I still *did not manage / have not managed* to find what I am looking for.

8 The last job I *applied / have applied* for required applicants to speak some Japanese.

9 I *started / have started* learning Spanish a few months ago but I *did not obtain / have not obtained* a qualification in it yet.

10 I *did not apply / have not applied* for a job with your company before.

11 I *hoped / have hoped* that you would consider my application favourably.

12 However, I *have waited / have been waiting* for a reply for several weeks and I still *did not receive / have not received* one from you.

3 Complete the text. Use the past simple, present perfect simple or present perfect continuous of the verbs in brackets.

The Internet (0) has changed (change) our lives in so many ways. Most people say it (1)..... (make) life better, and this is probably true. It (2)..... (have) some bad influence, too but I think it (3)..... (do) more good than harm.

First of all, it has made communication much easier and it (4)..... (bring) people around the world much closer. I have a friend in Mexico, who I (5)..... (write) to for years. First, I used to write her letters and I (6)..... (have to) wait for weeks before I (7)..... (get) a reply. It (8)..... (take) ages! Now we communicate by email. Already this week, I (9)..... (sent) her five emails – and I (10)..... (receive) a reply to all of them in just a few minutes!

What else? Well, for the last few days, my son (11)..... (teach) me to make video calls so I can talk to friends and see them at the same time. It's amazing – and highly addictive, too! Already this morning, I (12)..... (sit) in front of the screen for three hours, and I (13)..... (not finish) half my emails yet!

'Flying? I've been to almost as many places as my luggage!' Bob Hope

Past continuous, past perfect simple, past perfect continuous

Past continuous

Form

Affirmative: *He **was talking** to you.*
Question: *Were you **working** at six?*
Negative: *Sorry, I **wasn't listening**.*

Use

We use the past continuous:

- for actions in progress at a particular time in the past:
  *I **was watching** TV at nine o'clock last night.*
- for two or more actions happening at the same time in the past:
  *She **was studying** while I **was watching**.*
- to set the scene or give background information in a story:
  *It **was pouring** with rain and she **was wondering** what to do.*
- with the past simple, to say that something happened in the middle of something else:
  *I **was sleeping** when my friend **called**.*

Past perfect simple

Form

Affirmative: *They **had left** at four o'clock.*
Question: ***Had** the party **finished** at eleven?*
Negative: *I **hadn't seen** him before.*

Use

- We use the past perfect simple to talk about a past action that happened before another past action:
  *When I **had picked** some fruit, I went back to the beach.*
- We often use the past perfect simple with *when* and *after*:
  ***After** they **had eaten**, they cleared the table.*
- Compare:
  *When I arrived at the party, Mary **left**.*
  (= I arrived and then Mary left.)
  *When I arrived at the party, Mary **had left**.*
  (= Mary left and then I arrived.)

Past perfect continuous

Form

Affirmative: *She **had been working** for hours.*
Question: ***Had** they **been waiting** long?*
Negative: *I **hadn't been feeling** well.*

Use

- We use the past perfect continuous to talk about something that started in the past and continued up until another time in the past:
  *They **had been climbing** for five hours before they reached the top.*
- We often use the past perfect continuous to emphasise how long a past action, event or state lasted:
  *I **had been feeling sleepy** all day, so I went to bed.*

PRACTICE

1 Choose the correct answer.

0 Columbus *discovered / was discovering* America though at first he believed he *had reached / had been reaching* Asia.
1 Hillary and Tenzing *were climbing / had been climbing* for several days when they *reached / had reached* the summit.
2 Scott *reached / was reaching* the South Pole in 1912 but Amundsen *had beaten / was beating* him by a month.
3 Franklin *flew / was flying* a kite when he *made / was making* a very important discovery about electricity.
4 Before Columbus *discovered / was discovering* America, people *were believing / had believed* that the Earth was flat.
5 Newton *made / was making* his great discovery while he *was sitting / had been sitting* under an apple tree.

2 **Complete the sentences. Use the past continuous, past perfect simple or past perfect continuous of the verbs in brackets.**

0 They stayed in the tent because it was raining (rain).
1 The roads were wet because it ..... (rain) all night.
2 He was broke. He ..... (spend) all his money on clothes.
3 I ..... (have) a nightmare when the alarm went off and woke me up.
4 His hands were covered in oil because he ..... (try) to fix the car all morning.
5 When she opened the window, she was happy to see it ..... (snow) lightly. If fact, it ..... (snow) all night and snow ..... (cover) all the rooftops.
6 When Mrs Morgan came into the classroom, the pupils ..... (run) around and they ..... (scream) at the top of their voices. They ..... (knock) over chairs and desks and someone ..... (draw) funny pictures on the board.
7 Although I ..... (set off) early, I got there late and everyone ..... (wait) for me to start the meeting. Mr Wilson told me they ..... (wait) for a whole hour.
8 When we got back from our holiday, we discovered that someone ..... (break into) our house. The burglars, however, ... (drop) a piece of paper with an address on it as they ..... (climb) out of the window.

Before John Kennedy became President in 1960, he had said that the state of the country was bad. When he became President, he said things were just as bad as he'd been saying they were.

3 **Complete the article. Use the past simple, past continuous, past perfect simple or past perfect continuous of the verbs in brackets.**

Mark Zuckerberg, creator of *Facebook*

The pre-Facebook years

By the time he (0) began (begin) classes at Harvard, Mark Zuckerberg (1)..... (achieve) a reputation as a programming genius. Before the end of his second year at university, he (2)..... (already / design) *CourseMatch*, a program that helped students choose classes based on the choices other students (3)..... (make). At the time, Mark (4)..... (study) psychology and computer science.

A short time later, he created *Facemash*, a program that let students select the best-looking person from different photos. Until then, students (5)..... (use) books called 'Face Books', which included the names and photos of everyone who lived in the student dorms. *Facemash* went up over the weekend but by Monday morning, the college (6)..... (take) it down because its popularity (7)..... (flood) Harvard's server. Before *Facemash*, students (8)..... (ask) the university to develop a similar website for months. Mark (9)..... (work) on a very similar idea when he heard about these requests, so he decided to do something about them – and promised to build a better site than what the university (10)..... (plan).