

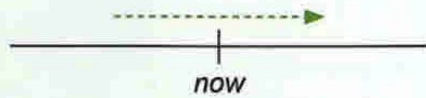
Present perfect continuous and present perfect

A

We use the present perfect continuous to express the idea of an activity (a task, piece of work, etc.) in progress until recently or until the time of speaking:

Reminder → A9–A12, A16–A17

- Have you been working** in the garden *all day*? You look exhausted.
- She's **been writing** the book *since she was in her twenties* and at last it's finished.



Note that we often use time expressions to say how long the activity has been in progress.

We don't use the present perfect continuous with verbs such as **belong**, **know**, **(dis)like**, and **understand** that describe unchanging states:

- Have you known** each other long? (*not* Have you been knowing ...)
- I **haven't liked** ice cream since I ate too much and was sick. (*not* I haven't been liking ...)

When we talk about situations (general characteristics or circumstances) that exist until the present we can often use either the present perfect or present perfect continuous:

- We've been looking forward to** this holiday for ages. (*or* We've looked forward to ...)

B

We often use the present perfect or the present perfect continuous to talk about something that has recently finished if we can still see its results. However, we generally use the present perfect continuous with verbs that suggest extended or repeated activity. Compare:

- He's **broken** his finger and is in a lot of pain. (*not* He's been breaking ...) *and*
- I've **been playing** squash and need a shower! (*more likely than* I've played ...)

We use the present perfect continuous rather than the present perfect when we draw a conclusion from what we can see, hear, etc. We often use this form to complain or criticise:

- Who's **been messing** around with my papers? They're all over the place.
- You've **been eating** chocolate, haven't you? There's some on your shirt.

When we talk about the *result* of circumstances or an activity, we use the present perfect, rather than the present perfect continuous. When we focus on the *process* we often use either the present perfect or the present perfect continuous. Compare:

- Prices **have decreased** by 7%. (*not* Prices have been decreasing by 7%.) *and*
- Prices **have been decreasing** recently. (*or* Prices **have decreased** ...)
- I've **used** three tins of paint on the kitchen walls. (*not* I've been using three tins of paint on the kitchen walls.) *and*
- I've **been using** a new kind of paint on the kitchen walls. (*or* I've used ...)

C

The present perfect continuous emphasises that an activity is ongoing and repeated, while the present perfect suggests the activity happened only once or on a specified number of occasions:

- Miguel **has been kicking** a football against the wall all day. (*more likely than* ... **has kicked** ...)
- He **has played** for the national team in 65 matches so far. (*not* He has been playing for the national team in 65 matches so far.)

Compare:

- The workers **have been calling** for the chairman's resignation. (= emphasises a number of times, probably over an extended period) *and*
- Workers **have called** for management to begin negotiations on pay. (= maybe a number of times or only once.)

Exercises

6.1 Complete each pair of sentences using the same verb. Use the present perfect in one sentence and the present perfect continuous in the other. Use negative forms where appropriate. A-C

disappear give put read stay stop swim

- 1 a Martina Gonzalez in a rented flat since returning to Buenos Aires.
b We at this hotel a couple of times before.
- 2 a All day, the police motorists to question them about the accident.
b Good, the noise I can start concentrating on my work again.
- 3 a I any of Dickens' novels.
b I this book on astrophysics for hours and I'm still only on page six.
- 4 a Dr Fletcher the same lecture to students for the last ten years.
b Mr Sato nearly a million pounds to the charity this year.
- 5 a I did 20 lengths of the pool today. I that far since I was at school.
b I and I feel exhausted.
- 6 a In recent years, companies increasing resources into internet marketing.
b The South African coal company the Calverton Mine up for sale.
- 7 a An important file from my office.
b Plants and vegetables from my garden since we had new neighbours.

6.2 Here are two views on the government's announcement that it is to cut the money it gives to the Influenza Research Centre. If necessary, correct the present perfect continuous verbs using either the present perfect or past simple. A-C and Unit 3

a Dr Petra Adams, the Director of the Centre



It's remarkable to think that since 1950 influenza (1) *has been claiming* more than 50,000 lives in this country, and in 1957 alone around 6,000 people (2) *have been dying*. But over the last 20 years we at the Centre (3) *have been making* considerable progress on understanding the illness. We (4) *have been producing* over a hundred books and articles reporting the results of our research and in 2012 they (5) *have been awarding* the Nobel Prize for medicine to one of my colleagues. In our more recent work we (6) *have been looking* into the effects of influenza on heart disease and we (7) *have also been exploring* a possible link between climate change and the recent increase in the number of cases of influenza. It is a tragedy that the government (8) *has been making* this decision now.

b Sabir Khan, the Opposition spokesperson for science



The previous government (1) *has been investing* huge amounts of money into the Centre and I think it's terrible that the present government (2) *has been announcing* this cut when the number of cases of influenza (3) *has been increasing*. The Centre (4) *has been running* successfully for many years. But this decision is just typical of this government. It (5) *has been neglecting* health research ever since it was elected, and (6) *has been cutting* back on spending on science generally. Although the government says that the cut is necessary because of the recent world economic problems, I (7) *have been finding* evidence that they (8) *have been planning* this for some time. I (9) *have been speaking* to the Minister about this yesterday and (10) *have also been writing* to the Prime Minister demanding that the decision should be reversed.