

Present and past time: review

A

Continuous and simple

Reminder → Section A

When we focus on an activity itself, starting before and continuing up to (and possibly beyond) a particular point of time, rather than focusing on actions as completed events, we use *continuous* forms:

- Ingrid can't come to the phone. She's **washing** her hair.
- As you're **not using** your car at the moment, can I borrow it?
- This time yesterday I **was flying** over the Pacific.
- Was** she **wearing** that red dress when you saw her?

We use *simple* forms to talk about general situations, habits, and things that are or were always true:

- When I **worked** as a postman I **got up** at three o'clock every morning.
- Miguel **doesn't play** golf very well.
- These birds **build** their nests on the ground.
- The earthquake **struck** the area at midday yesterday. (past simple for completed events)

We use simple forms with verbs that describe unchanging states (that stay the same):

- She **intends** to work hard at school and go on to university.
- Did you understand** the instructions we were given?

However, we can use continuous forms with these verbs when they describe something happening or changing:

- She **was intending** to talk to Tony about the idea, but she didn't get the opportunity.
- I'm **understanding** physics much better now that Mr Davies is teaching us.

B

Perfect

We use *perfect* verb forms to describe one event or state from the point of view of a later time. The present perfect suggests a connection between something that happened in the past and the present time. Note, however, that the situation or event does not have to continue until the time of speaking, only to have some connection or relevance to the present time:

- I've **finished** that book you wanted, so you can borrow it now.
- Have you turned** the heating off? I don't like it to be on when I'm not at home.
- Your nose is bleeding. **Has** somebody **hit** you?

The past perfect is used to locate a past event before another past event:

- I invited him out to dinner, but he said he **had** already **eaten**.
- By the time I picked up the phone, they **had rung off**.

C

Combinations of perfect and continuous

We combine the perfect and continuous forms in the present perfect continuous to describe an activity in progress either at or recently before the time of speaking, and possibly beyond it:

- I **have been following** the discussions on the forum with great interest.

We can also use the present perfect continuous to talk about activities that have recently finished with some result that can be seen, heard, etc.:

- Look at the dirt on your clothes! **Have you been digging** in the garden again?

The past perfect continuous has a similar meaning. However, the point of reference is not 'now' (as it is with the present perfect continuous) but a point in the past:

- When we met Lena and Marko, they **had been riding**.
- It **had been snowing** heavily for hours and when I went to the door I couldn't open it.

Exercises

- 8.1 Amy is writing a blog for her friends and family as she travels around Australia. Use the present simple, present continuous, past simple or past continuous of the verbs in the box to complete the extract. **A**

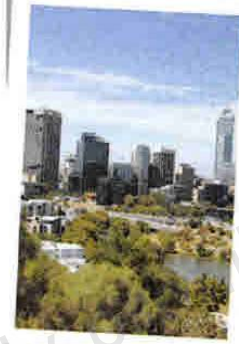
In 1–10 use:

arrive feel (x2) get go know spend text wait ~~write~~

In 11–20 use:

ask complain enjoy get (not) get on hear look (x2) seem start

I (1) am writing this blog in a hotel room in Perth. I (2) here a couple of hours ago after a long coach journey from Adelaide. I (3) pretty tired so this will only be a short post before I (4) to sleep. As you (5), I (6) last week in Adelaide with Ruby. I (7) her a month or so ago to tell her when I would be arriving, and she (8) at the airport for me when I (9) there. For the first few days I (10) quite jet-lagged, but I soon (11) over that after a few days of lazing around on the beach. Ruby (12) living in Adelaide a lot, although she (13) for a new job just now. It (14) that she (15) very well with her colleagues. Apparently they constantly (16) about the working conditions and it (17) to annoy Ruby. She (18) me to pass on her best wishes to all her old friends. So now I (19) forward to exploring Perth. I (20) it's a wonderful place. I'll post again soon. Amy



- 8.2 Complete this extract from a newspaper article using the past simple, present perfect or past perfect of the verbs in brackets. **B**

RONSON SACKED IN UNITED CUTS

Aston United (1) have sacked (*sack*) their manager, Neil Ronson. The former England football international (2) (*say*) that he (3) (*hear*) the news when he (4) (*return*) from a three-week holiday in Spain and that it (5) (*come*) as a complete shock. 'There (6) (*be*) no hint of any problem when I (7) (*leave*) for the holiday.' Aston United (8) (*appoint*) Ronson as manager two years ago and

last season they (9) (*finish*) second in the First Division. However, they (10) (*win*) only five matches so far this season. The chairman of the club, Peter White, last night (11) (*accuse*) Ronson of lack of commitment to the club. 'Neil's attitude (12) (*disappoint*) us recently. Over the last few months he (13) (*spend*) more time on Spanish beaches than working with the players in Aston.'

- 8.3 Here is the rest of the conversation in Exercise 7.3. If the italicised verb is correct, write ✓. If it is wrong, correct it using the past simple, present perfect, past perfect, present perfect continuous or past perfect continuous. **A–C**

- A: (1) *Did he have* any health problems recently?
 B: Well, he (2) *'s been suffering* from stress for some time, but we (3) *have thought* a holiday in Scotland would be relaxing for him. He (4) *worked* too hard for months, and we (5) *'ve been trying* to persuade him to have a break for ages before he agreed.
 A: So (6) *have you gone* up to Scotland when you (7) *have heard*?
 B: No, Mum (8) *has gone* up to be with him, but the doctors (9) *have checked* him over and (10) *had been saying* that it's not too serious. They (11) *gave* him some medicine to bring down his blood pressure and (12) *had told* him that he needs complete rest for a couple of months. So Mum's driving him back in the car tomorrow.
 A: Well, send him my best wishes when you speak to him.
 B: Thanks, I will do.