

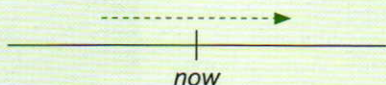
Present perfect continuous and present perfect

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 ...)
- ☐ 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%.)
- ☐ 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.)
- ☐ 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.)