

Present Perfect Continuous - Use

When do we use the present perfect continuous tense in English?

Note: This is also called the **present perfect progressive** tense.

! We do not usually use stative verbs (*know, like, own, etc.*) in the present perfect continuous.

For example:

- I've **known** Anna for ten years. (Not: ~~I've been knowing~~)
- He's **liked** ballet since he was a kid. (Not: ~~He's been liking~~)

Two main exceptions: *mean, want*

- I've **been meaning** to text you.
- She's **been wanting** to play that game.

We use the present perfect continuous for:

1. Unfinished actions

These are things that started in the past and continue to the present. They are still happening now. The focus is usually on the duration of the action.

Note: We can often use the present perfect simple here as well.

Words and phrases that are commonly used in these sentences: **for, since, how long, all [period of time]**

For example:

- I've **been working** at this company for three months.
- We **have been living** in Sydney since 2023.

- Paul **has been sitting** there for over an hour.
- It **hasn't been raining** all morning.
- **Have** you **been waiting** long?
- How long **has** she **been playing** tennis?

2. Temporary actions, situations or habits

These are also things that started in the past and continue to the present, but we are not specific about the duration.

Note: It is also often possible to use the present continuous here.

Words and phrases that are commonly used in these sentences: **recently, lately, this [period of time]**

For example:

- I've **been thinking** about quitting my job.
- She's **been walking** to work recently.
- My students **have been working** hard this term.
- Frank and Ethel **haven't been doing** their chores lately.
- **Has** it **been snowing** much this afternoon?
- What **have** you **been watching** lately?

3. Repeated actions that are usually* annoying or surprising

These are regular actions that started in the past and continue to the present. We use the present perfect continuous to emphasise the repetition of the action.

Note: We can sometimes use the present perfect simple here, but the present perfect continuous emphasises the ongoing (continuous) nature of the action. We also sometimes use the present continuous (with words like "always" or "constantly") to emphasise the frequent nature of an action, but we use the present perfect continuous to indicate that the action started recently, or if we want to say when the action started.

For example:

- You **'ve been forgetting** to lock the door.
- You **'ve been leaving** your towel on the floor again.
- My boss **has been interrupting** me all morning.
- They **'ve been sending** us gifts every month.
- He **'s been texting** me every day lately. (*This could have a neutral or positive feeling attached, so it is not necessarily annoying or surprising.)
- I **'ve been going** there since I was six. (*same as above)

4. Recent finished actions

These are things that stopped recently and often have a noticeable result.

For example:

- I'm sweaty because I **'ve been running**.
- I think Mia **'s been playing** in the garden.
- Frank **has been cooking**. The kitchen is a mess.
- Where have you been? I **'ve been looking** for you everywhere.
- The ground is wet. **Has it been raining?**
- You look exhausted. What **have you been doing?**

! These activities have stopped, but they might start again.

For example:

I'm sweaty because I've been running. I am not running as we speak, but I might or might not start running again soon.