

Unit 6: PRESENT PERFECT

PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE

FORM: have / has + past participle

Statement:

You *have seen* that movie many times.

Question:

Have you seen that movie many times?

Negative:

You *have not seen* that movie many times.

USE 1 Life experience

These are actions or events that happened sometime during a person's life. We don't say when the experience happened, and the person needs to be alive now. We often use the words *ever* and *never* here or an unfinished time word (*this month, this week, today*). However, we can't use the *Present Perfect* with a finished time word.

- I have been to Tokyo.
- We have never seen that film.
- I haven't seen her this month.

USE 2 Actions with a present result

We often use the *Present Perfect* to talk about something that happened in the recent past, but that is still true or important now. We can also use the tense to talk about something recent, even if there isn't a clear result in the present. This is common when we want to introduce news.

We often use the words *just / yet / already / recently*. Sometimes we can use the *Past Simple* here, especially in US English.

- I've lost my keys (so I can't get into my house).
- I've just seen Lucy.

USE 3 Unfinished Actions

We use this tense when we want to talk about unfinished actions or states or habits that started in the past and continue to the present. Usually we use it to say *how long* and we need *since* or *for*. We use *since* with a fixed time in the past (*2004, April 23rd, last year, since I was at school, since I arrived*). We use *for* with a period of time (*2 hours, three years, six months*).

- I've known Karen since 1994.
- She's lived in London for three years.
- I've liked chocolate since I was a child.

PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

FORM: have / has + been + present participle

Statement:

You *have been waiting* here for two hours.

Question:

Have you been waiting here for two hours?

Negative:

You *have not been waiting* here for two hours.

USE: 1 Unfinished actions

We use *Present Perfect Continuous* to say how long unfinished actions have been in progress. We often use this with *for* and *since*. This use is very similar to how we use the *Present Perfect Simple*, and often it's possible to use either tense. Of course, we can't use the *Present Perfect Continuous* with stative verbs.

- I've been living in London for two years.
- She's been working here since 2004.
- We've been waiting for the bus for hours.

USE 2 Temporary habits or situations

The action started in the past and continues to the present in the same way as with use number 1, but we don't answer the questions about *how long* so clearly. Instead, we use a word like *recently*. This is very similar to the use of the *Present Continuous* for temporary habits and often either tense is possible.

- I've been going to the gym a lot recently.
- They've been living with his mother while they look for a house.

USE 3 Recent actions with a present result

We use *Present Perfect Continuous* with actions which have recently stopped, although the whole action can be unfinished, and have a result in the present. We don't use a time word here. The *Present Perfect Simple* has a very similar use, which focuses on the result of the action, whereas the *Present Perfect Continuous* focuses on the action itself.

- I'm so tired, I've been studying.
- I've been running, so I'm really hot.
- It's been raining so the pavement is wet.

PRESENT PERFECT PASSIVE: have / has + been + past participle

- My car has been sold.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TENSES: PRESENT PERFECT OR PAST SIMPLE?

Past Simple is used with finished actions, while *Present Perfect* is used with unfinished actions.

- I've known Julie for ten years (I still know her).
- I knew Julie for ten years (but then she moved away and we lost touch).

When using the *Present Perfect*, we talk about people that are still alive. However, with *Past Simple Tense*, the person can be alive or dead.

- My brother has been to Mexico 3 times.
- My great-grandmother went to Mexico 3 times.

When we use *Present Perfect* with finished actions, they have a result in the present. The same is not true for *Past Simple*.

- I've lost my keys! (I can't get into my house now).
- I lost my keys yesterday. It was terrible! (No result. I got new keys yesterday).

Present Perfect is used with unfinished time words (this week, this month, today, etc.) and *Past Simple* is used with finished time words (last week, last month, yesterday, etc.).

- I've seen John this week.
- I saw John last week.

SIMPLE OR CONTINUOUS?

While both tenses are used to talk about unfinished actions that started in the past and are still true in the present, *Continuous* isn't used with stative verbs:

- I've known John for three years.
- She's been living here for three years.

Sometimes there's really no difference in meaning between the two tenses. This is especially the case with verbs such as *live*, *work* and *study*:

- They've lived in London since 2004.
- They've been living in London since 2004.

Sometimes, there is a difference in meaning: *Continuous* can be used to emphasise the length of time that has passed. *Simple* is generally neutral:

- They've been waiting for hours! (This emphasises the length of time).
- They've waited for hours. (This doesn't emphasise the length of time).

Simple is often used when we're talking about how much or how many and not with *Continuous*:

- She's drunk three cups of coffee this morning.
- She's drunk at least a litre of coffee today.

Continuous often focuses on the action itself, while *Simple* focuses on the fact that the action is finished:

- I've been reading the book you recommended. (I'm enjoying it, but I'm not finished).
- I've read the book you recommended. (I've finished it, so we can talk about it).

We use *yet* and *already* with *Simple*:

- Have you read the book yet?
- She's finished her work already.

With results in the present, *Simple* is used when the action is finished, and the result comes from the action being finished, while *Continuous* is used when the result comes from the action itself (it doesn't matter if the whole action is finished or not).

- I've eaten dinner, so let's go out.
- I've been eating dinner, so there are plates all over the table.

Finally, *Continuous* can be used to emphasise that something is temporary:

- She's been running a lot recently. (She doesn't usually do this).

EXERCISES

- [Choose the Past Simple or Present Perfect 1](#)
- [Choose the Past Simple or Present Perfect 2](#)
- [Choose the Past Simple or Present Perfect 3](#)
- [Choose the Past Simple or Present Perfect 4](#)
- [Choose the Pr. Perfect Simple or Continuous 1](#)
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