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## BSc Degree

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**English – 1 (Basic English)**  
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**Present Tense**

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**THE PRESENT TENSE : Forms and Meanings**

Lida Paul

A portrait of Ms. Lida Paul, a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a purple patterned blouse. She is positioned to the right of the title text.

Hello everyone, and welcome to today's class. In today's class, we will be talking about tense. Tense is a grammatical category or a grammatical form in the English language that is primarily used to express time. What we do to understand time or express time forms in English is make modifications around the most important element in the sentence which is a verb.

This means to talk about time or represent time in English, we work around the verb in the sentence make modifications to it, and use these specific verb forms in order to talk about present, past, or future time in English. These verb forms are referred to as tense forms in English. There is another category that is very important for us to know along with the tense forms to talk about time in English.

And, this is called the aspect. What aspects do is help you talk about relational time? The tense forms alone are incapable of talking about the details or helping us represent the details of the time especially when it is relational in nature. For this purpose, we need the aspect. What aspect forms do they combine with the tense forms and help you represent or help you talk about how exactly has the action been carried out in a given period of time?

And to express this we use either an additional particle which expresses the aspect form or we work around the verb in order to show this change in the aspectual form. In today's class, we will be looking at particularly the forms and meanings of the present tense which means we are going to look at both the tense and the aspect forms that help us to talk about the present tense in English or the present time in English.

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### Simple Present tense

- ▶ Simple present tense often refers to the present time.
- ▶ Following are the major meanings for simple present tense when it refers to present time.
  - i) A state that exists at the present time  
Eg. I want a pencil and a pen.  
*Want*
  - ii) A habitual action  
Eg. He reads newspaper in the morning.
  - iii) An action that is happening at the present time  
Eg. Here comes my friend, Shikha.



We first talk about the simple present tense. Simple present tense, it is the most basic form of tense which helps us talk about the present time in English, which means it gives you a reference to the absolute present time in English, it can express or the simple present form can have the following major meanings as you see on the screen. The first one is that it expresses a state that exists at the present time, we will understand this with the help of examples that we have here.

So, the first example “I want a pencil and a pen”, this particular sentence has the verb want. The verb ‘want’ in the sentence, the verb ‘want’ here represents a state that exists at the present time. So, this is the first use, the first function of the simple present form of the tense the second function the second meaning that a verb that is expressed in the simple present tense form is that of a habitual action.

So, whenever you have to talk about an action that is repeated on an occasion, which is the explanation for what a habitual action is. So, when you have to talk about such an action, then

you usually use the simple present tense form. The example here; is “He reads newspaper in the morning.” and the simple present tense forms helps you talk about this habit or for that matter any other habit.

The third meaning that a verb in the simple present form can indicate is that of an action that is happening at the present time. And the example we have here is; “Here comes my friend Shikha”. So, here the verb comes, is an indication of an action that is happening at the time that the person talks, at the time that the speaker is talking. So, “here comes my friend Shikha”. So, these are the three different meanings, at least the three different meanings that the present simple present tense form can convey.

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Structure of simple present tense

i) She **drinks** tea in the evening. (Affirmative sentence)  
Verb Article Adjective Tense marker -s

ii) I **do not** want samosas. (Negative sentence)  
She does not make flower bouquets.  
Auxiliary verb Tense marker Verb

iii) Do you **sing** songs? (Interrogative sentence)  
Does she not wear hats?  
Verb Article Adjective Tense marker Verb

iv) For interrogative sentences with the wh-words?  
What does he like?  
Where **do** you live?  
Wh-word Auxiliary verb Verb

We will now look at the structure of the simple present tense form in order to understand how should you construct a sentence in English and the simple present form. The first example we have here is; “She drinks tea in the evening.” I want you to pay attention to the structural aspect of the simple present tense form here.

So, as we already discussed, we are going to look at the verb forms very clearly when we discuss tense because tense is indicated mostly around the verb in the sentence. It could be a modification or a particle that is added on the verb, or sometimes the verb can undergo internal

changes in order to express these forms or sometimes you add certain other element along with the verb in order to express your time form.

So, these forms sometimes also referred to as the auxiliary verbs or the helping verbs. All of these particles together help you convey the time. So, here the first sentence you have the verb ‘drinks’, and if you look at the verb carefully, you see an additional particle the sounds ‘drinks’ are the suffix ‘s’ that you see along with the verb drink.

You might have a tendency to identify this as the tense marker. ‘Drink’ is your verb, no doubt, but if you think the suffix ‘s’, the sounds is the tense marker in the sentence that is not the case. This ‘s’ in the sentence is not a tense marker, it is an agreement marker, this is something that is put along with the verb to show that the verb here agrees with the singular subject ‘she’, in any case, the ‘s’ sound here or the ‘s’ suffix here is not a tense marker, it is an agreement marker.

So, then what is it in the sentence that tells you that this is a sentence written in present tense? In simple present tense forms, the tense marker is unavailable. So, there is no tense marker in the simple present tense forms, there is a present tense but it is not visible at the surface level in the sentence. So, there is no tense marker, no visible tense marker.

In a simple present tense form, this would change so, for example, if I have to change the sentence using a plural form, then I am going to write “they drink tea in the evening”. And in this case, you see that the s, the suffix s disappears. So, the verb appears in its bare form in the simple present tense. The markers that you see associated with the verb is of the agreement not of the tense, so, no tense marker for simply present tense.

Let us look at the second sentence; “I do not want samosas.” This is an example of a negative sentence. So, the word not here is the marker of negation. And that is making it a negative sentence. So, “I do not want samosas”, the verb in the sentence is ‘want’, this is the verb. And, what is the tense here?

This one has and that tense is indicated in the sentence using the auxiliary verb ‘do’. So, this is your auxiliary verb and this is also the tense marker in the sentence, this verb do is what, helps you understand that the sentence is written in the present simple present tense. The third example of an interrogative sentence again you see the usage of the auxiliary verbs ‘do’ and ‘does’.

So, “Do you sing songs?” “Does she not wear hats?” The difference again is of the third person singular form and the rest. So do with the others and does with the third person singular forms, “Do you sing songs?” “Does she not wear hats?” So, ‘sing’ and ‘wear’ becomes your verbs in the sentences and ‘do’ and ‘does’ become your tense markers showing that this is a present, simple present tense form.

For interrogative sentences with the WH words now this is a case where the first one and the third one is a case where you have a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question, and the fourth one is an interrogative sentence with WH words, which means this is a content question which means you have something as an answer, you have a content word as an answer for this. So, the first one here is; “What does he like?” and “Where do you live?” So, again, you have like and live as your verbs in the sentence and you have ‘does’ and ‘do’ to indicate the tense forms.

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### Perfect Aspect in the present

- ▶ It refers to a present state of action in relation to the past.
- ▶ It can provide the following meanings.
  - i) the current event is also a previous event  
Eg. It has drizzled all day.
  - ii) Change to the present event is the result of a recent finished event  
Eg. The train has finally arrived.  
I have learned driving.
  - iii) Present state is a continuation of a past time  
Eg. I have owned the scooter for some time.
- ▶ Time adverbials like *just*, *since*, *for*, *already*, and *yet* are common with the present perfect tense.



Let us now move on to the perfect aspect in the present time. The present perfect form is usually used to refer to an action that has happened in the past and has got relevance in the present time. So, it has got a it is a present action which has got the relation to the past. Remember we talked about relational and absolute time.

So present perfect time is something that helps us to talk about time in its relational sense, In this case, the present time in relation to the past time. So, when you have a sentence in the present

perfect form or when you use the present perfect tense forms it can give you the following meanings, we will understand these different meanings with the help of examples that we have here. And the first one here is; “It has drizzled all day.”

Now, if you look at the sentence you have “It has drizzled all day.” This is an indication or this is the meaning that is conveyed by the sentence is that the current event which is the ‘drizzling’ the current event is also a previous event. So, “has the drizzling stopped?”, we do not know there is no indication of whether the event has stopped or not.

The second one, you have two examples here; “The train has finally arrived.” and “I have learned driving.” the first one it indicates both of them indicates change to the present event as a result of a previous recently finished event. Train has finally arrived. So, the train has arrived in that sense it is a past action it is a finished event, but it has got some relevance in the present, if something has changed in the present.

“I have learned driving.” you see that the learning part is over it is a finished action, but it has got relevance in the present which means “I do not know driving before but I know driving now”. So, it is a change that has happened in the present which was affected by the previous action or finished previous action that is the meaning and the understanding of this particular sentence.

So, to use your sentence to mean in this way, again, you can use the present perfect form. The last one you have here is the present state is a continuation of the past time and the example we have here is; “I have owned the scooter for some time.” So, this means that I have had the scooter and I still have the scooter. So, the present event the present state is a continuation of the past time I have had the scooter, scooter and I still have the scooter. So, to express all these three different meanings that we have discussed you can use the present perfect form.

Also note that certain time adverbials like just, since, or, already, yet, these time adverbials are very commonly used along with the present perfect form in order to make the time reference more explicit to make it clear, if you want to make the time expression to talk about the time in a little more elaborate sense with all its nuances and details, then time adverbials like yet already, just, so on and so forth is what is very commonly used along with this tense form the present perfect tense form.

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### Structure of the present perfect tense

- i) The train has finally arrived (Affirmative sentence)

*aux verb*      *Verb*      *V<sub>3</sub> past participle*

- ii) I have not gone on a holiday for a long time. (Negative sentence)

*Not*      *Verb*      *past participle*

She has not come home since December 2021.

- iii) Has she bought the book yet? (Interrogative sentence)

*Have you eaten already?*



We will now look at the structure of the present perfect tense, so, that we understand how to construct a sentence accurately and grammatically in the English. Let us see. The first one you have here is; "The train has finally arrived." So, like always we are going to focus more on the verb part in order to understand the construction and the grammar clearly, because that is what changes in order to give us the tense and the aspect forms.

So 'has arrived finally' is an adverb that we have used here. We will mostly focus on the verb part to understand the structure. So, 'has arrived' is the verb form that we have used here. So you have 'has', which is the present form of the auxiliary verb, and then you have the main verb which is the word 'arrive' and you have this 'ed' suffix here, keep in mind in the perfective forms or the perfect tense forms.

The associated 'ed' suffix along with the verb is not the past tense form, but this is the V3 form or what we refer to as the past participle form. Do not get confused because of the suffix 'ed' because, you use the same suffix to indicate the past tense to. In the perfect tense forms, the suffix ed along with the verb indicates a participle form.

So you have the auxiliary verb has and you have the verb arrive along with which you have the suffix 'ed' indicating the participle form. So, together, the auxiliary verb 'has', along with the verb in its participle form together represents the present perfect form of the tense in English.

Now Let us look at the second sentence, again this is a negative sentence. You have two different sentences here mostly to show the difference between the usage of ‘have’ and ‘has’ both are used with the present perfect tense.

‘Has’ is used along with the third person singular forms and with all the other forms you have the ‘have’ form used. So, the first example here, “I have not gone on holiday for a long time.” So, ‘not’ is the marker of negation in the sentence you have, ‘have’ and ‘gone’ together making the sentence the present perfect tense. So, ‘have’ is your auxiliary verb in the present tense form and then you have gone which is the verb go with the, the past participle marker here which gives you the present perfect form in English.

The second sentence, “she has not come again”, you have ‘not’ as your negation marker and then we focus on ‘has’ and ‘come’ because that is what helps you understand present perfect so, ‘has come’ has is your auxiliary verb in the present tense form and followed by the main verb which is come, come is here again in the participle form, but we know that certain verbs they do not take the ‘ed’ or then forms along with it, they are irregular verbs.

Now, the third one and interrogative sentence two of them here again with ‘has’ and ‘have’ to show you the difference between its usage along with the first person and the third person and the other forms, so; “Has she bought the book yet?” ‘she’ third person singular form you use has along with it, bought is in the V3 form. So, this is the V3 form of the verb buy, bought, bought. ‘Buy’ is an irregular verb.

So, it changes its forms by changing the verb internally or changing one of the sounds internally in the verb and you have bought. So, ‘bought’ is again in the V3 form, the past participle form, so, ‘has’ and ‘bought’ together make it the present perfect tense. So, that is the form. Then; “Have you eaten already?” this part again eat, ate, eaten is V3 form and you have ‘have’ because you are using a non third person singular form here it is ‘you’.

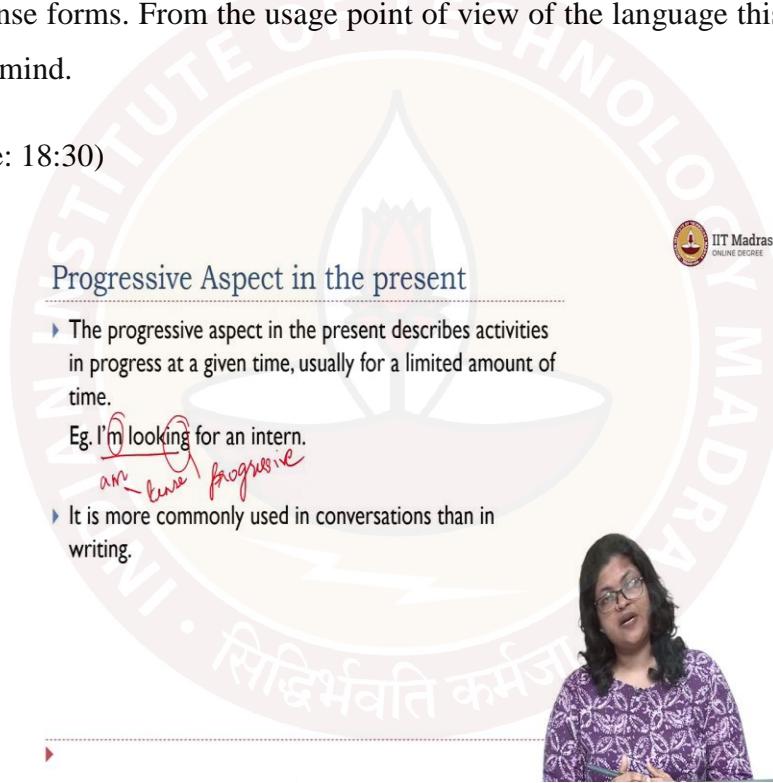
So, ‘have you’, ‘have I’, ‘have we’, ‘have they’, this is the usage that you see here. Now, please look at the time adverbials in the sentences the previous sentences for a long time, “since December 2021, bought the book yet, have you eaten already”. So, for a long time, for since, yet

already, all of them are time adverbials that you use most commonly with the perfect tense forms.

What does for indicate? For usually shows the duration of time. So, when you have to talk about the duration of time, then you use the time adverbial for if you have to talk about a specific point like ‘since December 2021’, so when the time reference has to be more specific, specific point of time then you use since.

Similarly, yet and already. “Has she bought the book yet?” “Have you eaten already.” So yet and already they appear again in conversations in question forms mostly in English along with the present perfect tense forms. From the usage point of view of the language this is very important, so please keep in mind.

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### Progressive Aspect in the present

- ▶ The progressive aspect in the present describes activities in progress at a given time, usually for a limited amount of time.  
Eg. I'm looking for an intern.  
*am ~~like~~ progressive*
- ▶ It is more commonly used in conversations than in writing.



A photograph of a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a purple patterned blouse, speaking into a microphone. She is positioned in front of a white background with the IIT Madras logo watermark.

We are now going to discuss about another way in which you can express the present tense or time or the present time in English and that is using the progressive aspect in the present form. So, what does the progressive aspect in the present form do? It helps you to describe an activity. So, when you have to describe an activity which is in progress at a given period of time, particularly for a limited amount of time, for a limited duration you use the progressive aspect of the present time.

Example, “I am looking for an intern.” So, what is the aspect marker here. So, the aspect marker here is going to be ‘ing’. So, this ing suffix is what gives it the progressive sense and so, this is a contractive form of ‘I am’ and this is indicative of the tense. This tells you that we are talking about the present time. So, ‘am’ is which is another form of the verb be, present tense form of the verb be particularly used with the first person singular form I in English is the tense marker here and ing along with the verb look here is your progressive aspect marker.

So, this is an additional information for you that in terms of usage, this progressive aspect is more commonly used in conversations but not writing. So, in academic prose or any other sorts of any other forms of professional writing, we do not use the progressive aspect of the progressive form is not encouraged instead, the present perfect form is what is recommended mostly.

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Structure of Present progressive tense

- i) She is eating a mango. (Affirmative sentence)  
 Verb Verb progressive
- ii) They are writing an exam. (Plural subject)  
 Verb Verb progressive
- iii) The car is not moving due to the traffic. (Negative sentence)  
 Verb Verb -ing (progressive marker)

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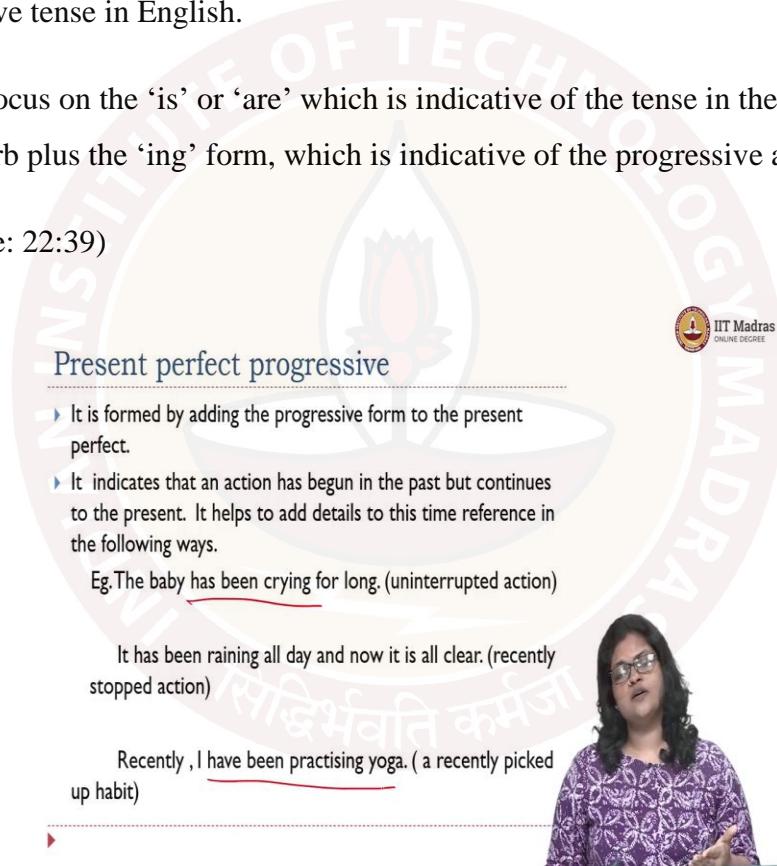
Now we will look at the structure of the present progressive tense. So, the first sentence you have here an affirmative sentence. So, “She is eating a mango.” So, like we discussed ‘eat’ is your main verb and ‘ing’ suffix is what indicates the progressive aspect and you have the verb ‘is’ the auxiliary ‘is’, which is the singular present tense form of the verb ‘be’ and this is what is indicative of the tense in the sentence.

The second sentence here with a plural subject now, ‘they are writing an exam’, same thing, the difference is that now, you have used the plural form of the verb be which is are again this is indicative of tense, this tells you the tense of the sentence, ‘write’ is your verb here and then you have the ing form which is your marker for the progressive aspect.

The third sentence here a negative sentence, so, “The car is not moving due to the traffic.” not, negation marker, we are going to focus mostly on this part is ‘moving’ is again is an indicative of the tense here the present tense form of the verb be is when used with a singular subject ‘move’ is your verb here and ‘ing’ is your progressive marker, so, this is how you form a sentence in present progressive tense in English.

So, you have to focus on the ‘is’ or ‘are’ which is indicative of the tense in the sentence, then you have the main verb plus the ‘ing’ form, which is indicative of the progressive aspect.

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### Present perfect progressive

- ▶ It is formed by adding the progressive form to the present perfect.
- ▶ It indicates that an action has begun in the past but continues to the present. It helps to add details to this time reference in the following ways.
  - Eg. The baby has been crying for long. (uninterrupted action)
  - It has been raining all day and now it is all clear. (recently stopped action)
  - Recently , I have been practising yoga. ( a recently picked up habit)



There is one more way of talking about the present time in English and that is the present perfect progressive tense form. We have already told that the aspect forms they either combined with the tense form in order to talk about relational time, but what they can also do is they can combine with each other in order to give further additional details about a relational time and this is an example of that present perfect progressive form.

So, let us look at this in detail. This is formed by adding the progressive form to the present perfect form. And what does this indicate? It tells us that an action that has begun in the past but continues to the present. So, we talk about a previous action, an action that has begun in the past, but something that has continued to the present and what are those details? we look at the examples in order to understand the details.

The first one is; “The baby has been crying for long.” baby has been crying for long again like in the other cases we will focus on the verb part of the sentence ‘has been crying’, “The baby has been crying for long.” which means that this is an uninterrupted action. What does uninterrupted action mean? Nobody stopped it the baby continued to cry. So the baby has been crying for long in some sense, this has a relation to a past event, the action of crying has begun in the past and it has continued to the present uninterrupted.

And, the second sentence, “It has been raining all day and now it is all clear.” So here we are referring to an action that is stopped. There was an action that has begun in the past which was ‘the rain has begun in the past’ ‘it has begun raining in the past’ and ‘it continued till now’ and has stopped at the time of speaking. So this is a recently stopped action. The rain has begun, it has begun raining in the past. It has continued till the time I finished talking.

So it is a recently completed action which is continued for some time. So that is the sense that this statement gives us, ‘it has been raining all day and now it is all clear’. The last one you have here; “Recently, I have been practicing yoga.” So, this is a recently picked up habit when you have to talk about a recently picked up habit you use the present perfect progressive tense form. “Recently, I have been practicing yoga.”

So, these are the uses of the present perfect progressive form when you have to talk about an uninterrupted action, particularly an action that has begun in the past and has continued to the present and was uninterrupted or an action that has begun in the past has continued till the time of your speaking and is reasonably stopped. Or the third one is to talk about a habit that you have recently picked up. So, to convey all these three different meanings you can use the present perfect progressive form.

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## Structure of the present perfect progressive tense



i) Amit ~~has been driving~~ the car from Bengaluru to Chennai.  
(Affirmative sentence)

*auxiliary verb V3  
drive -ing . progressive*

ii) Shirin has not been drinking water and now she is dehydrated. (negative sentence)

*not drink -ing . progressive*

iii) The birds ~~have not been responding~~ to calls lately due to interference from artificial bird calls from the smartphones. (Plural subject)



We will look at the structure of the present perfect progressive tense to understand it better and especially to form accurate sentences. The first one you have here, "Amit has been driving the car from Bengaluru to Chennai." So, what is your present perfect progressive form? 'Has been driving', 'has been driving the car from Bengaluru to Chennai'. So, we will look at all these three elements here you will see that it is formed by the combination of 'has been driving'.

So, what did we do here? You have the main verb here, which is 'drive', that is your verb, then you have the 'ing' form here which is your progressive marker. You have the verb be in its V3 form, which means, this is the past participle form of the verb 'be' and then you have the auxiliary verb has in the present form.

Participle verbs, the verb in its participle form cannot give you a tense so, obviously, the tense in the sentence comes from the auxiliary verb 'has', so 'has' is the present form of the tense so, the present form of the verb so, 'has' is the present form. So, this is what is indicative of the tense in the sentence this tells you that the sentences in the present time.

Then, you have 'ing' which gives you the progressive form that is the presence of the V3 form along with the has, so the 'has' and 'been' together. So, the auxiliary verb has and the V3 form of the verb 'be' these two together give you the perfect form and when this combines with the 'ing' form you get the perfect progressive form in English. So, present perfect progressive. So, that is how you understand this.

We look at the negative sentence here ‘has not been drinking’. “Shirin has not been drinking water and now she is dehydrated.” So, what is the form we are looking at? Not of course is the negation form. So, if you look at ‘has been drinking’ you see has is your auxiliary verb giving it the tense form then you have ‘been’ the V3 form of the verb be this together gives you the perfect form and here you have the verb ‘drink’ and ‘ing’ which gives you the progressive form.

This together gives you the present perfect progressive form. So, has been drinking, has not been drinking water. The same thing in the third one, you see this is a sentence with a plural subject. So, “The birds have not been responding to calls lately due to interference from artificial bird calls from the smartphones.” What is the form that we are focusing on here?

Have not been responding, ‘not’ again a negation marker we are looking at have been responding so, the verb here has changed now auxiliary verb from ‘has’ to ‘have’ because you have the plural subject, the birds. The form has changed but the meaning remains the same with respect to the present perfect progressive form. Have is your present tense marker here, the auxiliary verb so, that gives you an indication of the tense which is present tense, then been V3 form of the verb ‘be’, have and been together gives you the perfect form.

This along with the ‘responding’, the verb respond in its progressive form with ‘ing’ together gives you the present perfect progressive form in English. So, this is the way how you construct a sentence accurately in the present perfect progressive form in English. I hope you have understood the four different tense and aspect forms and the meanings that they can convey in the present time in English that is all for today’s class and I will meet you again.