

**(B) THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS TENSE****Form**

This tense is formed by the present perfect of the verb **to be** + the present participle:

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I have been waiting	I have not been waiting	Have I been waiting?
You have been waiting (singular)	You have not been waiting	Have you been waiting?
He/she has been waiting	He/she has not been waiting	Has he/she been waiting?
We have been waiting	We have not been waiting	Have we been waiting?
You have been waiting (plural)	You have not been waiting	Have you been waiting?
They have been waiting	They have not been waiting	Have they been waiting?

Contracted negative forms: haven't and hasn't

This tense is used for an action that began in the past, includes the present and may extend into the future.

*Example:* I have been waiting more than half an hour for the bus.

**Exercise 42**

Give the present perfect continuous form of the verb within brackets.

1. They ..... (study) English for the last five years.
2. It ..... (rain) since morning.
3. They ..... (live) in England since 1975.
4. He ..... (work) in the garden all day.
5. She ..... (wait) for you for the last fifteen minutes.
6. He ..... (sleep) for a long time.

7. She ..... (write) regularly to me since she went to Washington.
8. He ..... (work) since seven o'clock this morning.
9. They ..... (walk) for nearly an hour.
10. I ..... (search) for my purse since morning.
11. He ..... (visit) his friends.
12. We ..... (live) in this house for the last ten years.
13. I ..... not (eat) meat for the last two years.
14. I ..... not (drive) my car since the accident.
15. I ..... not (see) him for a long time.
16. He ..... (write) a lot of books.
17. Nobody ..... (come) to see us since we moved to our new house.
18. You ..... (waste) your time.
19. I ..... (write) letters since nine o'clock.
20. He ..... (wear) that shirt for a long time.
21. She ..... (clean) the kitchen all morning.
22. They ..... (repair) the furniture since last Saturday.
23. They ..... (talk) since dinner.
24. The postman ..... (deliver) letters since eight o'clock.
25. She ..... not (speak) to me for the last two weeks.

### **Exercise 42A**

Write 10 sentences describing what you have done this year up to now.

### **(C) THE PAST PERFECT TENSE**

#### **Form**

This tense is formed with **had** and the past participle.

The form is, therefore, the same for the first, second and third persons.

#### **Use**

- (a) It describes an action completed in the past before another past action that is either mentioned or implied.

*Examples:* We had got everything ready before we started the journey.  
When we entered the class room, the bell had rung.

# Present perfect continuous (I have been doing) and present perfect (I have done)

**A**

Compare the use of the present perfect continuous and the present perfect:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The guests <b>have been arriving</b> since about 6 o'clock.</li> <li>Since the operation two months ago, Joe <b>has been learning</b> to walk again. He can already take two or three steps unaided.</li> <li>She's <b>been driving</b> for 3 years now.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mark and Helena <b>have arrived</b> – they're <b>in</b> the sitting room.</li> <li>I <b>have learnt</b> a lot about painting from Paul.</li> <li>We <b>have driven</b> all the way here without a break.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

We use both the present perfect continuous and the present perfect to talk about something that started in the past and which affects the situation that exists now. The difference is that the present perfect continuous focuses on the *activity* or *event* which may or may not be finished. The present perfect, however, focuses on the *effect* of the activity or event, or the fact that something has been *achieved*.

Sometimes the difference between them is simply one of emphasis (see also Unit 10B):

- I've **been following** their discussions with great interest. (emphasises the activity; that is, my following their discussions)
- I've **followed** their discussions with great interest. (emphasises the result; I may now react to what was said or decided)

**B**

We can use either the present perfect continuous or the present perfect to talk about activities or events that are repeated again and again until now:

- Joseph **has been kicking** a football against the wall all afternoon. (or ...**has kicked**...)
- The press **has been calling** for her resignation for several weeks. (or ...**has called**...)

However, if we mention the number of times the activity or event was repeated, we use the present perfect rather than the present perfect continuous:

- ! • I've bumped into Susan 3 times this week.  
 • He **has played** for the national team in 65 matches so far.

**C**

We use the present perfect rather than the present perfect continuous when we talk about long-lasting or permanent situations, or when we want to emphasise that we are talking about the *whole* of a period of time until the present (see also Unit 5D):

- ? • I **have always admired** Chester's work.  
 • They **are** the most delicious oranges I've ever eaten.

When we talk about more temporary situations we can often use either the present perfect continuous or the present perfect:

- 'Where's Dr Owen's office?' 'Sorry, I don't know. I've **only worked** / I've **only been working** here for a couple of days.'

**D**

When we want to emphasise that a situation has changed over a period of time up to now, and may continue to change, we prefer the present perfect continuous to the present perfect:

- The pollution problem **has been getting worse** over the last decade.
- Sales **have been increasing** for some time.

However, if we talk about a specific change over a period of time which ends now, particularly to focus on the *result* of this change (see A), we use the present perfect:

- Prices **have decreased** by 7%. (= in a period up to now)
- The population **has grown** from 35 million in 1950 to 42 million today.

## EXERCISES

8.1

Complete the sentences with these verbs, using the same one for each sentence in the pair. Use the present perfect in one sentence and the present perfect continuous in the other. (A)

claim disappear give move stop

- 1 a An important file ..... from my office.
- b Plants and vegetables ..... from my garden since we had new neighbours.
- 2 a Dr Fletcher ..... the same lecture to students for the last ten years.
- b Mr Goldman ..... nearly a million pounds to the charity this year.
- 3 a With their win yesterday, Italy ..... into second place in the table.
- b As house prices in the cities have risen, people ..... into the countryside.
- 4 a For years he ..... that he is related to the royal family.
- b The earthquake ..... over 5000 lives.
- 5 a All day, the police ..... motorists to question them about the accident.
- b Good, the noise ..... I can start concentrating on my work again.

8.2

Choose the most appropriate sentence ending. (B)

1 I've swum...	a and I feel exhausted.
2 I've been swimming...	b thirty lengths of the pool.
3 They have asked me...	a to visit them for ages, but I've never had the time.
4 They have been asking me...	b to join the company on a number of occasions.
5 I have visited Vienna...	a three or four times before.
6 I've been visiting Vienna...	b since 1990 and I've always felt very safe here.
7 We've stayed...	a at this hotel a couple of times before.
8 We've been staying...	b at a small hotel near the sea.

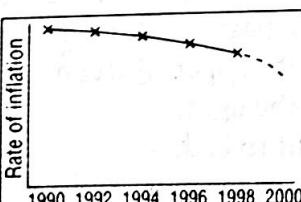
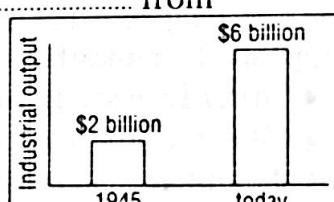
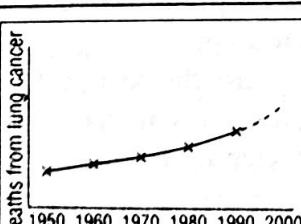
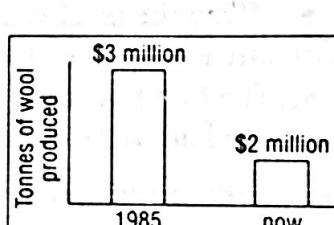
8.3

Complete these sentences using the verb given. If possible, use the present perfect continuous; if not, use the present perfect. Use ↗ to add any words outside the space. (C)

- 1 Since they were very young, the children ..... (enjoy) travelling by plane.
- 2 It ..... (snow) heavily since this morning.
- 3 I'm pleased to say that the team ..... (play) well all season.
- 4 I never ..... (understand) why we have to pay so much tax.
- 5 I ..... (not read) any of Dickens' novels.
- 6 In recent years, Brazilian companies ..... (put) a lot of money into developing advanced technology.

8.4

Complete the sentences to describe the information in the graph. Use the verb given. (D)

1 Inflation ..... since ..... (fall)		2 Industrial output ..... from ..... in ..... to ..... today. (grow)	
3 The number of deaths from lung cancer ..... since ..... (rise)		4 Production of wool ..... by ..... since ..... (decline)	

## **THE PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS TENSE**

### **Form**

This tense is formed with **had been** + the present participle.

### **Use**

To indicate that the activity was continuous or was going on at a particular point or period of past time, the past perfect continuous may be used.

*Examples:* Mr. Brown asked him what he had been doing for such a long time.

When we started in the morning, the streets were wet. It had been raining during the night.

**Exercise 43**

Fill in each blank with the past perfect tense, simple or continuous, of the verb within brackets. The continuous form can be used in some sentences.

1. When I went to the shop, they ..... (sell) the blue shirts. So I bought a green one.
2. I ..... (study) French before I went to Paris.
3. I went to bed after I ..... (brush) my teeth.
4. He told me that he ..... already (write) to his father.
5. He ..... (live) in England before he went to Canada..
6. I ..... (want) to write to him but I forgot about it.
7. I asked him why he ..... (take) my book without my permission.
8. She ..... (hear) about it before I told her.
9. The thieves ..... (escape) before the police arrived.
10. Your father asked me where you ..... (go).
11. When the bell rang, we ..... (finish) our work.
12. I ..... just (go) to bed when the phone rang.
13. He said that he ..... (be) in England for ten years.
14. He was tired because he ..... (work) since dawn.
15. After you ..... (go) I went to sleep.
16. When we arrived, the meeting ..... (begin).
17. The sun ..... (rise) before they started their journey.
18. We asked him what countries he ..... (visit).
19. He ..... just (arrive) from Delhi when we met him.
20. He wondered why you ..... not (reply) to his letter.
21. They rescued the elephant that ..... (fall) into a pit.
22. He returned the book. He ..... not (read) it as he was busy.
23. We ..... (hope) to go on a holiday but we cancelled the trip as my sister fell ill.
24. The police arrested the thief who ..... (steal) the money.
25. She said that she ..... (forget) to post the letter.

# Past perfect continuous (I had been doing) and past perfect (I had done)

**A**

Study these sentences with the past perfect continuous:

- They had been expecting the news for some time.
- She had been wearing high-heeled shoes, and her feet hurt.
- Mason was arrested, even though he hadn't been doing anything illegal.

We use the past perfect continuous when we talk about a situation or activity that happened over a period up to a particular past time, or until shortly before it.

**B**

Compare how the past perfect continuous and the past perfect are used:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She had been suffering from flu when she was interviewed.</li> <li>• I'd been finishing some work in the garden and hadn't seen Sue come home.</li> <li>• Bill had been saving since Christmas to buy a new bike.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She had suffered from asthma when she was very young.</li> <li>• I'd finished all my work, so I had very little to do.</li> <li>• Bill had saved enough money to buy the bike he wanted.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

! We use the past perfect continuous when we talk about the *continuity* or *duration* of a situation or activity, and the past perfect to talk about the *completion* of a situation or activity or its *effects*.

Sometimes the difference between them is simply one of emphasis (see also Unit 8A):

- I'd been working hard, so I felt that I deserved a holiday. (emphasises the activity)
- I'd worked hard, and the report was now finished. (emphasises the result)

**C**

If we talk about *how long* something went on up to a particular past time, we prefer the past perfect continuous. If we talk about *how many* times something happened in a period up to a particular past time, we use the past perfect:

- They had been travelling for about 36 hours. (*rather than* They had travelled...)
- We had been looking at the painting for about ten minutes before we realised who the artist was. (*rather than* We had looked...)
- I'd heard the symphony many times before. (*not* I'd been hearing...)
- The teacher had let them get away with their bad behaviour once too often. (*not* ...had been letting them...)

However, some verbs that describe *states* (see Unit 2A) are not often used with continuous tenses, and we use the past perfect with these even when we are talking about how long something went on up to a particular past time:

- ? • I had always believed that it would be easy to get a job. (*not* I had always been believing...)
- We had owned the car for 6 months before we discovered it was stolen. (*not* We had been owning...)

**D**

Compare the use of the past perfect continuous and past continuous:

- When we met Simon and Pat, they had been riding. (= we met after they had finished)
- When we met Simon and Pat, they were riding. (= we met while they were riding)
- When I got home, water had been leaking through the roof. (= it was no longer leaking when I got there)
- When I got home, water was leaking through the roof. (= it was leaking when I got there)

## EXERCISES

**10.1** Complete these sentences using one of the following. Use the past perfect continuous. (You will need to use a negative verb form in some cases.) (A)

pay / bills    stay / friends    smoke / cigar    try / to steal / car    attend / classes  
cycle / quite fast

- 1 She returned to the house where she had been staying with friends.
- 2 Sue ..... until she reached the hill.
- 3 By the smell in the room and his guilty expression I could tell that Alex .....
- 4 The principal called Carmen into his office because she .....
- 5 I had to give Peter some money when I found out that he .....
- 6 He told the police that he ..... . He said he thought it belonged to his brother.

**10.2** Complete the sentences with appropriate verbs, using the same one for each sentence in the pair. Use the past perfect continuous if it is possible; if not, use the past perfect. (B)

- 1 a She took a bottle from the bag she ..... all the way from home.  
b The avalanche ..... them 500 metres down the mountain but no-one was hurt.
- 2 a We ..... for visas well before our departure date, but still hadn't heard anything by the day we were due to leave.  
b She ..... for jobs, without success, since leaving university.
- 3 a He ..... all the way from New York to see me.  
b When the plane was diverted, it ..... from London to Frankfurt.
- 4 a She ..... for the same company since she qualified.  
b He ..... finally ..... his way up from the shop floor to a management position.

Look again at the sentences where you have used the past perfect continuous. In which is the past perfect also possible? (Also, study Unit 9 and decide when you could use the past simple instead of the past perfect in these sentences.)

**10.3** Choose the past perfect continuous form of the verb if appropriate. If not, use the past perfect. (C)

- 1 Andrew died last week. He ..... from cancer for some time. (suffer)
- 2 I ..... the view many times before, but it never failed to impress me. (see)
- 3 The opposing sides in the war ..... since the president was overthrown. (fight)
- 4 I ..... Megan since we were at school together. (know)
- 5 For years we ..... about buying new carpets, and last weekend we finally went out and ordered some. (talk)
- 6 My car was once again in the garage for repairs. This was the third time it ..... since I got it. (break down)
- 7 Before now we ..... on where to go on holiday. (always agree)

**10.4** Can you explain the difference between these pairs of sentences? (B & D)

- 1 a When I last went to Moscow, they had renovated St Basil's Cathedral.  
b When I last went to Moscow, they had been renovating St Basil's Cathedral.
- 2 a Although she tried to hide her face, I could see that Clara was crying.  
b Although she tried to hide her face, I could see that Clara had been crying.

