

Present perfect continuous and simple (I have been doing and I have done)

A

Study this example situation:



There is paint on Kate's clothes.
She **has been painting** her bedroom.

Has been painting is the *present perfect continuous*.

We are thinking of the activity. It does not matter whether it has been finished or not. In this example, the activity (painting the bedroom) has not been finished.



Her bedroom was green. Now it is yellow.
She **has painted** her bedroom.

Has painted is the *present perfect simple*.

Here, the important thing is that something has been finished. **Has painted** is a completed action. We are interested in the result of the activity (the painted bedroom), not the activity itself.

B

Compare these examples:

- ☐ My hands are very dirty. **I've been repairing** my bike.
- ☐ Joe **has been eating** too much recently. He should eat less.
- ☐ It's nice to see you again. What **have you been doing** since we last met?
- ☐ Where have you been? **Have you been playing** tennis?

- ☐ My bike is OK again now. **I've repaired** it.
- ☐ Somebody **has eaten** all the chocolates. The box is empty.
- ☐ Where's the book I gave you? What **have you done** with it?
- ☐ **Have you ever played** tennis?

C

We use the continuous to say *how long* (for something that is still happening):

- ☐ How long **have you been reading** that book?
- ☐ Lisa is writing emails. She's **been writing** emails all morning.
- ☐ They've **been playing** tennis since 2 o'clock.
- ☐ I'm learning Arabic, but I **haven't been learning** it very long.

We use the simple to say *how much*, *how many* or *how many times*:

- ☐ How much of that book **have you read**?
- ☐ Lisa is writing emails. She's **sent** lots of emails this morning.
- ☐ They've **played** tennis three times this week.
- ☐ I'm learning Arabic, but I **haven't learnt** very much yet.

D

Some verbs (for example, **know/like/believe**) are not normally used in the continuous:

- ☐ I've **known** about the problem for a long time. (*not I've been knowing*)
- ☐ How long **have you had** that camera? (*not have you been having*)

For a list of these verbs, see Unit 4A. For **have**, see Unit 17.

But note that you *can* use **want** and **mean** in the present perfect continuous:

- ☐ I've **been meaning** to phone Jane, but I keep forgetting.