

# Grammar Reference

## The present perfect continuous tense

### Meaning and use

We use the present perfect continuous to talk about an activity that started in the past and is continuing now or has recently finished.

*I've been reading that new book you lent me... I'm really enjoying it. (= action still in progress)*

*Is that Joe? I've been trying to contact you. I've got some bad news. (= action recently finished)*

We often use it to emphasise the continuous, ongoing nature of the activity or to say how long the activity has continued.

*She's already been sleeping for two hours.*

*It's been raining all morning.*

*I've been decorating the house this summer.*

When we use the present perfect continuous for situations that have recently finished, we often use the adverb **just**.

*'You've got paint all over your T-shirt.' 'Oh, I've just been painting the living room.'*

We often use **recently** and **lately** with the present perfect continuous.

*I'm really tired. I haven't been sleeping well lately.*

### Form

The present perfect continuous is made with:

**subject + have/has/haven't/hasn't + been + present participle of main verb.**

We put **just** and **already** between **have/has** and the **past participle**. We usually put adverbs of time and duration after the main verb.

### Positive

*Jack's working very hard for his exams. He's been revising all day.*

*I've been working at the café for two weeks.*

*You've been watching far too much telly for too long. Why don't you take up a new sport?*

### Negative

*I haven't been drinking coffee these last few days and my head is much clearer.*

*Doctor, I've been feeling dizzy and faint in the mornings.*

### Question

Present perfect continuous questions are made with:

**have/has not + subject + present participle.**

*Have you been eating all the biscuits? There are none left!*

*What have you been doing? You look exhausted!*

### Take note: present perfect continuous and present perfect

Some verbs are almost never used in the present perfect continuous. We use the present perfect instead. The most familiar examples of these are **be** and **know**.

WRONG: **She's been being** here for ten minutes.

CORRECT: **She's been** here for 10 minutes.

WRONG: **I've only been knowing** him since last week.

CORRECT: **I've only known** him since last week.

### Take note: already

It is possible to put **already** at the end of a positive sentence or question.

*He has already been talking for ten minutes.*

*Has he already been talking for ten minutes?*

*He has been talking for ten minutes already.*

*Has he been talking for ten minutes already?*

### Pronunciation

In sentences with **just** and **already**, there is usually no stress on **has/have** or on **just/already**. The stress is on the subject and the present participle.

*The chicken has **already** been cooking for an hour and a half.*

*I have **just** been thinking about Joe. Do you think he's better now?*

But we can put stress on **just/already** if we want to emphasise how recently or early something happened.

*The chicken must be ready by now. It's **already** been cooking for an hour and a half.*

*Oh, hi Joe. I've **just** been talking about you to Sophie!*