

4

present perfect

present perfect simple

Use present perfect simple

- to refer to events connected to the present, without a definite past time, often with *just*.
*Someone **has stolen** my bike! I've **just had** an idea.*
- to refer to indefinite events that happened at an unknown time in the past. This time is often recent, and is often used in news items when the information is 'current'.
*Archaeologists **have discovered** an Anglo-Saxon palace in London.*
*Police **have recaptured** two escaped prisoners.*

The time can also be all time up to the present.

*No-one **has (ever) proved** that aliens exist.*

- to refer to indefinite events with a result in the present.
*My car **has broken down**. (That's why I want a lift from you)*
- to describe what has been done or how many things completed in a period of time.
*The building **has been completed** on time.*
*United **have scored** three goals, and there's still half an hour left.*
- to describe a living person's experiences, what he or she has done in life so far.
*She **has painted** some of the best portraits of recent years.*
- to describe a state that lasts up to the present, with state verbs.
*I've **worked** in this department for the past six months.*
- to refer to a repeated action in a period of time up to the present.
*I've **cooked** dinner every night for ten years!*
- with some time expressions.
*I've worked here **since** 2002.*
This is the first time I've eaten squid!
*We've **already** seen this film.*

Note that most time expressions can be used with various tenses.

*I've **lived** here **for** ten years. (present perfect simple: I'm still here)*

*I **lived** there **for** three years. (past simple: I'm not there now)*

present perfect simple or past simple

- Use present perfect simple for unfinished time and past simple for finished time.
*She **has painted** some of the best portraits of recent years.*
*She **painted** some of the best portraits of recent years.*
In the first sentence the action has happened in a period up to the present, and may well continue. In the second sentence the action is finished. The artist may be dead. The events are in a period of time not connected to the present.
- Use to show speaker attitude.
Speakers may decide whether they see an event as connected to the present (present perfect simple) or not (past simple). This may be a matter of time or place. Tense use is here a matter of choice, rather than of grammatical 'right' or 'wrong'.
*I've **left** my books at home. (The speaker feels the event is recent, or is still near home.)*
*I **left** my books at home (The speaker feels the event is distant in time and place.)*
- Use with different time expressions.
*I **haven't been** to the cinema for ages / a long time.*
Present perfect refers to an action over a period of time and *for* describes how long the period is.
*It's ages / a long time **since** I **went** to the cinema.*
It's ages describes a period of time since an event and past simple describes when that event happened.

present perfect continuous

Use present perfect continuous

- for recent continuing activities, continuing up to the present.
I've been waiting here for half an hour!
I haven't been taking a lot of exercise lately.



- to explain a present situation.
I've been washing the dog – that's why my clothes are wet.
- to emphasize the length of a continuing activity.
I've been working on my project all morning.
- for a repeated activity, to emphasize the repetition of the activity.
He's been phoning me every day since the party.
- with *how long* questions.
How long have you been having these disturbing dreams? (this is a continuing process, and isn't finished)
- with *mean, think, consider*.
I've been thinking of changing my job.
I've been meaning to get in touch with Helen.
- with time words *lately, recently, all (day), every (morning), for, since*.
What have you been doing lately / recently?
I've been working on these accounts all day / since 9.00 / for hours.

present perfect continuous or present perfect simple

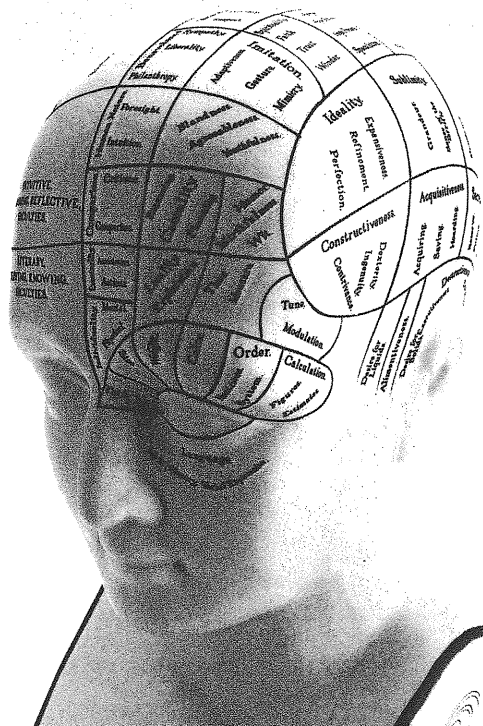
- With state verbs such as *live, work*, there is little contrast.
How long have you lived here? How long have you been living here?
- Verbs such as *sit, stay, wait* prefer the continuous form.
- With event verbs, present perfect simple emphasizes completion.
I've written my letters. (finished)
I've been writing letters. (describes my activity during a recent period)

- 1 Complete the sentence with the present perfect simple or past simple form of the verb in brackets.
- a Ian McEwan is a British writer who, according to many critics, (write) has written some of the best novels of recent years.
 - b Born in 1948, he (spend) much of his childhood abroad as his father was an army officer.
 - c He (study) English literature and creative writing at the universities of Sussex and East Anglia.
 - d He (write) a number of successful collections of short stories and novels.
 - e His novel *The Child in Time* (win) the Whitbread Novel Award in 1987.
 - f His later novels, including *Amsterdam*, *Atonement* and *Saturday*, (be) very successful.
 - g *Amsterdam* (receive) the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1998.
 - h *Atonement* and *Saturday* (also win) literary prizes.
 - i However, McEwan (always be) a controversial writer.
 - j Some writers (accuse) him of stealing details in *Atonement* from the work of another author, Lucilla Andrews.
 - k However, he (point out) the acknowledgement made to Lucilla Andrews in an author's note in the book.
 - l During this controversy, the American author Thomas Pynchon (write) a defence of McEwan in a British newspaper.

2 Underline the correct form.

The nature of intelligence

For many years scientists a tried / have been trying to define the nature of human intelligence. However, they b were / have been unable to agree on whether there is one kind of intelligence, or several kinds. In the early 20th century, psychologist Charles Spearman c came up / has come up with the concept of 'g' or 'general intelligence'. He d gave / had given subjects a variety of different tests and e found / has found that the people who f performed / have performed well in the tests g used / have used one part of the brain, which he h called / has called 'g', for all the tests. More recently, research i found / has found that this idea may well be true, as one part of the brain (the lateral prefrontal cortex) shows increased blood flow during testing. However, some scientists believe that intelligence is a matter of how much people j learned / have learned rather than some ability they are born with. They believe that environment also matters.



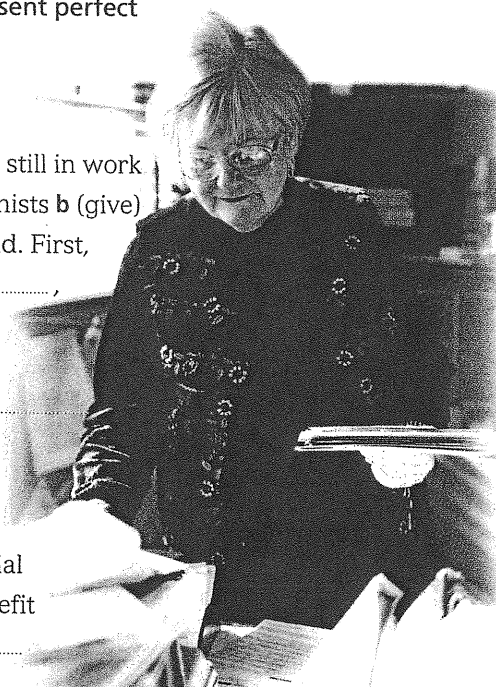
3 Rewrite the sentence so that it means the same as the first sentence. Use present perfect simple or continuous.

- | | |
|--|--|
| a I came here at 3.00 and now it's 5.00. | I <i>have been here for</i> two hours. |
| b I haven't seen this film before. | This is film. |
| c Mark is asleep. | Mark to bed. |
| d I began work here in 1999. | I since 1999. |
| e Anna isn't here yet. | Anna yet. |
| f We don't know each other. | We before. |
| g There isn't any food left. | Someone all the food. |
| h We started waiting in this queue half an hour ago! | We for half an hour. |
| i It's a long time since I was last here. | I a long time. |
| j This is our seventh wedding anniversary. | We seven years. |

4 Complete the text using the present perfect simple, present perfect continuous or past simple form of the verb in brackets.

The ageing population

The number of men and women in the US aged 60 or over still in work
 a (rise) *has been rising* for more than a decade. Economists b (give)
 a number of reasons for this trend. First,
 since 1985 the US economy c (expand)
 so there d (be) an increased
 demand for labour. At the same time, the cost of some
 services, such as health care, e (increase)
 so workers need to earn more money in later life. In
 addition, changes in social security benefits and rules
 f (have) a considerable effect on
 labour patterns. First, in 1977 and 1983 changes to the Social
 Security Act g (raise) the full-benefit
 age from 65 to 67 and h (introduce)
 other changes that make delaying retirement more
 attractive. Then, in 1986 the Age Discrimination Act i (end) compulsory
 retirement for all workers, allowing them to work later in life. Changes to pension laws
 j (also encourage) workers to stay in employment longer, as this gives them
 more chance of a larger pension when they retire.



GLOSSARY

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

- A Choose one of these topics and say what has happened, what has been happening or what has happened. These can be fictional if you prefer.
 news of family and friends climate change the political situation in your country
- B Use your knowledge of the news to make lists of:
 things that have happened recently things that have been happening
 things that happened

Need more practice? Go to the **Review** on page 208.