ENGLISH GRAMMAR · DEEP DIVE

The Perfect Continuous Aspects

'I have been waiting' against 'I have waited': the aspect that puts the emphasis on how long something went on rather than on whether it is finished.

B2 · perfect continuous · duration · for / since

have been + -ing

How long: an activity up to now.

I have been waiting.

She has been working here since April.

have + participle

How many / whether: a finished result.

I have written three emails.

I have read three books this month.

had / will have been + -ing

The same up to a past or future point.

had been raining

The ground was wet: it had been raining.

SIGNAL	USUALLY	EXAMPLE
all day, lately, recently	continuous	It has been raining all morning.
already, yet, just, three...	simple	I have made four calls already.
for / since	either	I've been waiting / lived here since May.
know, own, like, want	never continuous	I have known her for years.

1 Simple or continuous?

Put the verb in brackets in the present perfect simple or continuous.

1. I _____ (wait) for over an hour.
2. I _____ (write) three emails this morning.
3. She _____ (work) here since April.
4. You look exhausted. _____ you _____ (run)?
5. I _____ (know) her for many years.
6. It _____ (rain) all morning.
7. I _____ (make) four phone calls already.
8. I _____ (have) problems with the car lately.
9. I _____ (sleep) badly recently.

2 Past and future

Write had been + -ing, will have been + -ing, for or since.

1 I _____ (wait) an hour when she arrived.

2 The ground was wet: it _____ (rain).

3 By December I _____ (work) here ten years.

4 I have been waiting _____ ages.

5 She has been working here _____ April.

6 His hands were dirty: he _____ (repair) the car.

7 We've been living here _____ six years.

8 They were tired because they _____ (travel) all day.

3 Spot the mistake

Each sentence has one mistake. Write the correct sentence on the line.

1 I have been knowing her for years.

2 I have been reading three books this month.

3 I am waiting here since two o'clock.

4 How long are you learning English?

5 The ground was wet because it was raining before.

6 I have been having a car since 2019.

Remember An action that started in the past and is still going on is never present tense in English: I have been waiting since two (not I am waiting).

4 Learning to cook

Put the verbs in brackets in the present perfect simple or continuous.

I [1] _____ (learn) to cook since January. So far I [2] _____ (make) about thirty different dishes. This week I [3] _____ (practise) bread, and I [4] _____ (bake) five loaves already. My flatmates [5] _____ (eat) most of them! I [6] _____ (always / love) good food, but I [7] _____ (never / be) brave enough to try. Today I [8] _____ (stand) in the kitchen since seven o'clock, and my feet hurt.

5 Simple or continuous?

Which form does each phrase usually go with?

all day · lately · recently · for hours · three times · already · yet · know

continuous	simple

Where are the answers?

The answers, with an explanation for each one, are in the LinguaBite app. Open this Deep Dive and scroll to Downloads at the bottom of the article: once you have downloaded this worksheet, its answers appear there after a couple of days, so you do the exercises first. You can choose 1, 2 or 3 days in the app's Settings.

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