

Present perfect simple

Grammar explanation

We use the present perfect simple (*have* or *has* + past participle) to talk about **past actions or states** which are **still connected to the present**.

Unfinished time and states

We often use the present perfect to say what we've done in an unfinished time period, such as today, this week, this year, etc., and with expressions such as *so far*, *until now*, *before*, etc.

They've been on holiday twice this year.
We haven't had a lot of positive feedback so far.
I'm sure I've seen that film before.

We also use it to talk about life experiences, as our life is also an unfinished time period. We often use *never* in negative sentences and *ever* in questions.

I've worked for six different companies.
He's never won a gold medal.
Have you ever been to Australia?

We also use the present perfect to talk about unfinished states, especially with *for*, *since* and *how long*.

She's wanted to be a police officer since she was a child.
I haven't known him for very long.
How long have you had that phone?

Past actions with a result in the present

We can use the present perfect to talk about a past action that has a result in the present.

He's broken his leg so he can't go on holiday.
There's been an accident on the main road, so let's take a different route.
They haven't called me, so I don't think they need me today.
Again, if we say when it happened, we use the past simple.

He broke his leg last week so he can't go on holiday.
However, we often use the present perfect with words like *just*, *recently*, *already*, *yet* and *still*.

*We've recently started going to the gym.
She's already finished season one and now she's watching season two.
Have you checked your emails yet?*

Present perfect simple or continuous

Grammar explanation

We use both the present perfect simple (*have* or *has* + past participle) and the present perfect continuous (*have* or *has* + *been* + *-ing* form) to talk about past actions or states which are still connected to the present.

Focusing on result or activity

The **present perfect simple** usually focuses on the result of the activity in some way, and the **present perfect continuous** usually focuses on the **activity itself** in some way.

Present perfect simple	Present perfect continuous
Focuses on the result	Focuses on the activity
<i>You've cleaned the bathroom! It looks lovely!</i>	<i>I've been gardening. It's so nice out there.</i>

Present perfect simple	Present perfect continuous
Says 'how many'	Says 'how long'
<i>She's read ten books this summer.</i>	<i>She's been reading that book all day.</i>
Describes a completed action	Describes an activity which may continue
<i>I've written you an email.</i>	<i>I've been writing emails.</i>
	When we can see evidence of recent activity

Present perfect simple	Present perfect continuous
	<p><i>The grass looks wet. Has it been raining?</i></p> <p><i>I know, I'm really red.</i></p> <p><i>I've been running!</i></p>

Ongoing states and actions

We often use *for*, *since* and *how long* with the present perfect simple to talk about ongoing states.

How long have you known each other?
We've known each other since we were at school.

We often use *for*, *since* and *how long* with the present perfect continuous to talk about ongoing single or repeated actions.

How long have they been playing tennis?
They've been playing tennis for an hour.
They've been playing tennis every Sunday for years.

Sometimes the present perfect continuous can emphasise that a situation is temporary.

I usually go to the gym on the High Street, but it's closed for repairs at the moment so I've been going to the one in the shopping centre.

have been and have gone

We use **have/has been** when someone has **gone** to a place and **returned**:

A: Where **have** you **been**?

B: I've just **been** out to the supermarket.

A: **Have** you **ever been** to San Francisco?

B: No, but I've **been** to Los Angeles.

But when someone **has not returned**, we use **have/has gone**:

A: Where's Maria? I haven't seen her for weeks.

B: She's **gone** to Paris for a week. She'll be back tomorrow.