

present perfect simple

Both the **present perfect simple** and the **present perfect continuous** relate a past action to the present, but the present perfect simple suggests a completed action and focuses more on achievements and results. Consider the following:

- '**I've completed** my English and geography homework, but I **haven't started** my maths assignment yet.'
- 'She's **travelled** to many countries, but she's never **been** outside Europe.'
- '**Have** you ever **tried** Japanese food?' 'No, never. What's it like?'

Note that the present perfect is often used in conjunction with adverbs such as: 'ever', 'never', 'already', 'just', 'still', 'yet':

- 'Do you want me to clean the kitchen this afternoon?' 'No thanks, **I've already done** it.'
- '**I've just fed** the baby but she seems to be hungry again.'

present perfect continuous

When we use the **present perfect continuous**, however, there is usually a suggestion that the activity is not yet completed, or we wish to emphasise the length of time it has lasted or stress the continuous, on-going nature of the activity. The present perfect continuous is often used in conjunction with **for** or **since** phrases. Consider the following:

- 'How long **have** you **been waiting** for this bus?' '**I've been standing** here for over half an hour. These buses never come.'
- '**I've been looking** for a summer holiday job for two weeks now, but I still **haven't found** one.'
- '**We've been living** here in Brighton since 1988 – the year we got married.'

present perfect continuous vs present perfect simple

Whether teaching or learning the present perfect, it is often useful to present the two verb aspects in a contrastive way. Compare the following:

- 'Dick Francis **has been writing** novels since 1957. In forty odd years, he has written over 30 best sellers.'
- '**I've read** five chapters of this book this afternoon. (And I think that's quite an achievement).'
- '**I've been reading** this book all afternoon. (And I still **haven't finished** it yet.)'
- 'Who's **eaten** my chocolates? There are none left.'
- 'Who's **been eating** my chocolates? There are only a few left.'

present perfect vs past verb forms

Whether teaching or learning the present perfect, it may also be useful to compare it with past forms where the focus of attention is on a point or period in the past.

- 'I first went to the States in 1995. That was where I met Peter. So we've **known** each other for six years and we've **been married** now for three years.'
- 'That man **has been standing** outside our house since early morning. He arrived at eight o'clock and **hasn't moved** all day.'
- 'When I woke up the sun was shining, but **it's been raining** steadily since eleven o'clock and it's now half past three.'

Learning or teaching the form of the present perfect isn't too complicated, as long as you remember that it is constructed like this:

present perfect continuous: has ('s) / have ('ve) + been + ing

present perfect simple: has ('s) / have ('ve) + past participle

If the contracted forms present the greatest difficulty, it will be necessary to give as much practice as possible to: 'I've...' 'We've...' 'You've...' 'They've...' in contrast to: 'He's...' 'She's...' 'It's...'