

Present Perfect: simple or continuous?

Result or duration?

Do you want to express what has happened so far or how long an action has been going on yet?

Present Perfect Simple	Present Perfect Progressive
Result (what / how much / how often) I have written 3 letters. / I have been to Rome twice.	Duration (how long) I have been writing for an hour.

Certain verbs

The following verbs are **usually** only used in Present Perfect Simple (not in the progressive form).

- **state:** be, have (for possession only)
Example: We have been on holiday for two weeks.
- **senses:** feel, hear, see, smell, taste, touch
Example: He has touched the painting.
- **brain work:** believe, know, think, understand
Example: I have known him for 3 years.

Emphasis on completion or duration?

Do you want to emphasise the completion of an action or its continuous course (how has somebody spent his time)?

Present Perfect Simple	Present Perfect Progressive
Emphasis on completion I have done my homework. (<i>Meaning: My homework is completed now.</i>)	Emphasis on duration I have been doing my homework. (<i>Meaning: That's how I have spent my time. It does not matter whether the homework is completed now.</i>)

Result or side effect?

Do you want to express that a completed action led to a desired result or that the action had an unwanted side effect?

Present Perfect Simple	Present Perfect Progressive
<p>desired result</p> <p>I have washed the car. <i>(Result: The car is clean now.)</i></p>	<p>unwanted side effect</p> <p>Why are you so wet? - I have been washing the car. <i>(side effect: I became wet when I was washing the car. It does not matter whether the car is clean now.)</i></p>

Time + negation: last time or beginning of an action?

In negative sentences: Do you want to express how much time has past since the last time the action took place or since the beginning of the action?

Present Perfect Simple	Present Perfect Progressive
<p>since the last time</p> <p>I haven't played that game for years. <i>(Meaning: It's years ago that I last played that game.)</i></p>	<p>since the beginning</p> <p>I haven't been playing that game for an hour, only for 10 minutes. <i>(Meaning: It's not even an hour ago that I started to play that game.)</i></p>

Permanent or temporary?

If an action continues and we want to express that it is a permanent situation, we would **usually** use the Present Perfect Simple, and for temporary situations, the Present Perfect Progressive.

Present Perfect Simple	Present Perfect Progressive
<p>permanent</p> <p>Marco has lived in this town for 10 years. <i>(Meaning: He is a permanent resident of this town.)</i></p>	<p>temporary</p> <p>James has been living here for a year. <i>(Meaning: This situation is only temporary. Maybe he is an exchange student and only here for one or two years.)</i></p>

Signal words

Present Perfect Simple	Present Perfect Progressive
how often, how many times	how long, since , for since