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Learn English > English lessons and exercises > English test #66482: Past simple / Present perfect (simple / continuous)Past simple and Present perfectThe past simple is used to talk about completed actions at a particular point in the past, often with dates or times and words like yesterday, last and ago:Kurt went to Canada in 1991. I didn't see you yesterday. Where were you?The Present perfect is used to talk abouta) recent actions or events when no fixed time is given (e.g. news reports) often with words like just, recently and lately:A volcano has erupted in Japan. I've just seen your mother in the streetb) actions which have a result in the present:what's wrong? Have you lost your keys?c) actions in a period of time which is not yet finished, and experiences in someone's life so far, often with yet, so far, ever, for and sinceI haven't had any letters this week. (Compare : I had five letters last week)She's visited New York five times. (in her life so far)Have you ever been to Greece? The present perfect continuous is used to talk about actions which started in the past and are still happening, or which have recently stopped but have a result in the present:I've been waiting here for ten minutes.Your eyes are red. You haven't been crying, have you? Twitter ShareEnglish exercise "Past simple / Present perfect (simple / continuous)" created by anonyme with The test builder.Click here to see the current stats of this English test Please log in to save your progress.End of the free exercise to learn English: Past simple / Present perfect (simple / continuous)A free English exercise to learn English.Other English exercises on the same topics : 1 Past | Present perfect | All our lessons and exercises Download this explanation in PDF. Click here for our complete programme to perfect your English grammar. We use both of these tenses for finished and unfinished actions. The present perfect simple can be used (often with 'since' and 'for') to talk about unfinished actions that started in the past and are still true in the present. It's often used with stative verbs. I've known John for three years. The present perfect continuous can also be used (often with 'since' and 'for') to talk about unfinished actions that started in the past and are still true in the present. (Of course, we don't use the present perfect continuous with stative verbs). She's been living here for three years. Sometimes there's really no difference in meaning between the two tenses. This is especially the case with verbs such as 'live', 'work' and 'study'. They've lived in London since 2004. They've been living in London since 2004. I've studied French for ten years. I've been studying French for ten years. He's worked at the company since 2009. He's been working at our company since 2009. Sometimes, there is a difference in meaning: 1: The present perfect continuous can be used to emphasise the length of time that has passed. The present perfect simple is generally neutral: They've been waiting for hours! (This emphasises the length of time). They've waited for hours. (This doesn't emphasise the length of time). 2: On the other hand, the present perfect simple is often used when we're talking about how much or how many. This isn't possible with the present perfect continuous: She's drunk three cups of coffee this morning. She's drunk at least a litre of coffee today. (NOT: she's been drinking three cups of coffee this morning). 3: The present perfect continuous often focuses on the action itself, while the present perfect simple focuses on the fact that the action is completed: I've been reading the book you recommended. (I'm enjoying it, but I'm not finished). I've read the book you recommended. (I've finished it, so we can talk about it). We use 'yet' and 'already' with the present perfect simple: Have you read the book yet? She's finished her work already. This difference is often used to talk about different kinds of results in the present. The present perfect simple is used when the action is finished, and the result comes from the action being finished: I've eaten dinner, so let's go out. She's done all her homework, so she can relax this evening. I've made a cake. Would you like some? The present perfect continuous is used when the result comes from the action itself. It doesn't matter if the whole action is finished or not. The result is often something we can see, hear, smell, or feel: I've been eating dinner, so there are plates all over the table. She's been doing her homework, so she's tired. I've been making a cake, that's why the kitchen is such a mess. 4: Finally, the present perfect continuous can be used to emphasise that something is temporary: She's been running a lot recently. (She doesn't usually do this). Usually I study at home, but I've been studying in the library for the last week. Click here for more about the present perfect simple tense. Click here for more about the present perfect continuous tense. Download this explanation in PDF. Click here for our complete programme to perfect your English grammar. Present perfect or present perfect continuous exercise 1 Present perfect or present perfect continuous exercise 2 Present perfect or present perfect continuous exercise 3 English ESL WorksheetsGrammar TopicsVerb tenses When teaching Europeans, ESL tutors spend a lot of time explaining the difference between the simple past vs. present perfect and, the present perfect vs. present perfect continuous. Here are some exercises to help your students understand the difference. The difference between these two tenses is all about the time. We use the simple past when the action occurs in a time-frame that is finished. Another way to say this is 'closed time.' For example: 'Steve played tennis yesterday.' We use the present perfect when the action occurs in a time frame that continues. Another way to say this is 'open time.' Note: With present perfect, usually the action is finished, but it's the time that continues. For example: 'Jane has eaten an apple this week.' Jane finished eating the apple in the past but this week continues. Help your students distinguish between these two tenses, with this activity. Step one: Explain the 'closed time,' 'open time' concept. Step two: Ask your student to give you examples using closed time markers such as 'yesterday', 'last week', 'last year' and open time markers such as 'today', 'this week', 'this year.' Step three: Next, ask your student to imagine that it is 3pm. Step four: You say a time marker and ask your student whether it is open time or closed time. Each time they answer, ask them to give you an example. Make the time-frame gradually smaller until you end with '10 minutes ago.' Closed time Open time Yesterday Today Last week This week Last month This month Last year This year This morning This afternoon 2pm This hour 10 minutes ago So far In the last few hours, days, weeks, months, years. Step five: Finally, get your student to answer these questions using the past simple or present perfect. Then practice the other tense by saying things like: 'And this week?' How many coffees did you drink yesterday? (past simple)And today? (present perfect)How many packages have you sent this week? And last week? How many emails did you write this morning?And this afternoon?How many people did you see yesterday?And today?How many times have you gone to the gym this month?And last month? Continue until your student understands the difference between the two tenses. We use the present perfect continuous when the action starts in the past and continues to the present. For example: 'She has been working for the company for 5 years.' With the present perfect, the action has usually finished but in a time-frame that continues. For example: 'I have watched two films this week.' Watching the films happened in the past, but the week continues. However, state verbs such as, 'to have' for possession and 'to know,' cannot usually be put into continuous tense. Therefore, we use the present perfect if the action continues and not the present perfect continuous. For example: 'I have known John for 10 years', not, 'I have been knowing John for 10 years' or 'how long have you had that pen?' not, 'how long have you been having that pen.' Opinions: To love, to like, to have, to think (as in opinion), to believe, to prefer, to appear, to seem, to suppose. Descriptions of things: To belong, to contain, to exist, to consist, to be + adjective. Also: To know, to understand, to have (as in possession), to remember. Some verbs, however, can be either an action or a state as they have two meanings. These are: Think: Is a state when it is an opinion; 'She thinks France is a lovely country' and an action when speaking about ideas. 'He is thinking about going on holiday.' Have: Is a state when it talks about a possession; 'He has a car' and an action when talking about 'having food' or 'having a good time.' Remember: Is a state when talking about memories; 'He sat on the porch, remembering his Grandfather.' This is mainly used in literature. Help your students understand when to use the present perfect and when to use the present perfect continuous, with this exercise for homework. Present-perfect-tenses-worksheetsDownload Melissa and John (1. to be married) for 10 years. Melissa (2. work) for her company for 10 years. She has also (3. study) for her MBA for the last two years. John owns a furniture company. He (4. have) his company for 5 years. This week John (5. sell) 10 dining tables and 5 sofas. Melissa and John (6. live) in their apartment for 8 years. They live next door to a young couple. They (7. know) their neighbours for three years. John likes home improvement. He (8. paint) the terrace for two weeks. It is a large terrace and he (9. use) two pots of paint already. Melissa and John are looking after a friend's dog called Sam. Sam (10. have) a long walk today and so he is happy. He (11. stay) with Melissa and John for quite a long time - over two weeks already. Melissa and John don't mind. They (12. enjoy) the company. Sam likes to watch the wildlife in the garden. He (13. chase) three cats around the garden so far. Answers 1 have been married, 2. has been working, 3. has been studying, 4. has had, 5. has sold, 6. have been living, 7. have known, 8. has been painting, 9. has used, 10. has had, 11. has been staying, 12. have been enjoying, 13. has chased. We hope that exercises prove useful for your classes and students. If you'd like any other grammar exercise, please leave your suggestions in the comments below. Andromeda is a Fluentify English tutor. She has been teaching English in Spain and online since 2012. In addition to teaching, she is a TEFL writer. She recently moved to Edinburgh, Scotland and is currently working on her Scottish accent. 1. He filled his car yesterday. 2. We have been here since nine o'clock. 3. I can't get in because I have lost my keys. 4. Have you ever been to Naples? 5. I gave up smoking last year. 6. She has been busy this week. 7. He has been looking for a job for ages. 8. He didn't finish the exam in time yesterday. 9. They have seen that movie several times. 10. How long have you had this job? 11. I have known him since I was a child. 12. How long have you been at this school? 13. They left a few minutes ago. 14. I haven't been to the cinema for ages. 15. She hasn't had a day off since 2005. 16. I have been reading this book for weeks now. 17. My cousin worked in London for six months last year. 18. I bought it last week. 19. I have been living here all my life. 20. How often have you cleaned the windows this year? Using the words in parentheses, complete the text below with the appropriate tenses, then click the 'Check' button to check your answers. Learn English at Englishpage.com! Index of contents Video: present perfect Pr. Perfect / Past Simple 1 Pr. Perfect / Past Simple 2 Home Content Download full-size image from Pinterest Recent past actions (just, already, yet) To talk about past finished actions when we don't know or say when the action happened. There's often a present result. John has broken his leg, and he is in hospital. Sue has left. (=She is not here anymore.) We use just for actions that happened a very short time ago. Mike's just called. He said that he'd call you back. Sue has just left. She was here a minute ago. We also use the present perfect simple with the words already and yet. Have you already finished your homework? She hasn't called me yet. Experiences (never, ever, before) To talk about past experiences when we don't say when something happened. He has been to the moon. He's an astronaut. I haven't been to India. We often use the words never, ever, or before to talk about experiences. I have never read this book. Have you ever seen a John Wayne film? I haven't experienced anything like this before. How much we have done of something, or how many times we have done something To talk about how much of something we have done or how many times we have done something (none, one, two, three, etc.) up to now. He's drunk a lot of coffee and is very nervous now. I've seen this film three times. This shop has been robbed four times. You've eaten too much. The best thing I've ever done We can use the present perfect simple with the superlative and ever. This is the best meal I've ever had. It's the most amazing place we've ever travelled to. Actions from the past till now (how long, for, since, lately, all day/morning, etc.) We use the present perfect simple with stative verbs, like be, know, have, etc., to talk about situations that started in the past and still continue. We normally use expressions like how long, for, since, lately, all day, etc. We've known each other since we were kids. I haven't seen Kate for years. I've been very busy all weekend. Uses of the present perfect continuous Download full-size image from Pinterest Actions from the past till now (how long, for, since, lately, all day/morning, etc.) We use the present perfect continuous with dynamic verbs to talk about situations that started in the past and still continue or have just finished, and often have present results. Have you been crying? Sorry I am so dirty, but I've been painting. To express duration, we often use words like how long, for, since, lately, all day, etc. I haven't been feeling well lately. He's been annoying us all evening. She's been studying very hard for weeks. How long have you been playing golf? We can use the present perfect continuous for either continuous or repeated actions from the past till now. She's been studying a lot lately. She's been calling you for days. Present perfect simple or continuous? Situations that started in the past and still continue We can use either the present perfect simple or continuous for situations that started in the past and still continue. But we must use the present perfect simple with stative verbs, and we normally use the present perfect continuous with dynamic verbs (although the present perfect simple is also possible.) We've had this car for years. I haven't been sleeping well lately. We use the present perfect continuous with dynamic verbs to describe situations that started in the past and still continue when we want to emphasise how long the situation has lasted. I have been waiting for hours! (=I want to emphasise that I've been waiting for a long time). I couldn't do the dishes. I've been working all day. Finished and unfinished situations We use the present perfect simple to talk about finished actions in the past and the present perfect continuous to describe situations (happening from the past till now) that may or may not have finished. Who has eaten my cookies? (=We would say this if there are no cookies left) Who has been eating my cookies? (=We would say this if there are some cookies left) I've been watching the series you recommended. I'll tell you about it when I finish watching it. I've watched the series you recommended. I watched the last episode yesterday. Actions with present results We can use both present perfect simple or continuous for recent actions with a present result, but we use the present perfect simple when the present results come from having finished the action, and we use the present perfect continuous when the present results come from the process of performing the action (which may or may not have finished). Look how nice my car looks. I've washed it. Sorry, I'm so sweaty. I've been washing my car. Something is different in this house. Have you painted it? How come you are so dirty? Have you been painting? Page 2 Download full-size image from Pinterest Recent past actions (just, already, yet) To talk about past finished actions when we don't know or say when the action happened. There's often a present result. John has broken his leg, and he is in hospital. Sue has left. (=She is not here anymore.) We use just for actions that happened a very short time ago. Mike's just called. He said that he'd call you back. 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