

Present Perfect Progressive

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Grammar Notes

A. Introduction

In English, we use the present perfect progressive (also known as the present perfect continuous) for continuing actions. These actions started in the past and will continue into the future.

To understand when to use this tense compared to the present perfect, let's look at two different time frames: shorter (within one day) and longer (days, weeks, months, or years).

B. Finished Vs. Continuing Actions

SHORTER TIME FRAMES

	Present Perfect	Present Perfect Progressive
Pattern	have / has + p.p. (past participle)	have / has + been + <i>-ing</i> verb
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows a finished past action does not show when it occurred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> show a continuing action that started in the past, continues to the present, and will continue into the future
Diagram		
Time Markers	No time marker is needed, but for emphasis it is possible to use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> already yet still ever never 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for since ever since all
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have read <i>The Hobbit</i>. (I have finished reading it.) She has already written her report. (She has finished writing it.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have been reading <i>The Hobbit</i> all night. (I will continue to read it.) She has been writing her report for two hours. (She will continue to write it.)



Grammar Notes cont.

B. Finished Vs. Continuing Actions cont.

Repeated Past Action



Use the present perfect even if a finished past action happened more than once. Do not mention **when** it occurred.

- I **have performed** onstage many times.
- We **have been** to Mexico twice.
- She **has given** a presentation five times in her life.

Shorter Time Frames

For shorter time frames (usually within one day), the present perfect progressive is the natural-sounding choice for a continuing action.

- My son **has been eating** for half an hour.
- They **have been writing** emails since 7:00 am.

C. Continuing Actions

LONGER TIME FRAMES

	Present Perfect	Present Perfect Progressive
Pattern	have / has + p.p.	have / has + been + <i>-ing</i> verb
Use	shows an action that started in the past, continues to the present, and may continue into the future	shows an action that started in the past, continues to the present, and will continue into the future
Diagram		
Time Markers	for, since, ever since, all	for, since, ever since, all
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have studied English for eight years. • He has lived in the same house since he was a child. • She has talked about her new job for days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been studying English for eight years. • He has been living in the same house since he was a child. • She has been talking about her new job for days.



Grammar Notes cont.

C. Continuing Actions cont.

Longer Time Frames

For longer time frames, the present perfect and the present perfect progressive have the same meaning. To emphasize that the action will continue into the future, use the present perfect progressive.

- I **have studied** English for two years. (*emphasis on the past to the present*)
- I **have been studying** English for two years. (*emphasis also on the future*)
- I **have lived** in Tokyo for 12 years. (*emphasis on the past to the present*)
- I **have been living** in Tokyo for 12 years. (*emphasis also on the future*)

Non-Action Verbs

Remember that non-action verbs (states of being, possession, feelings, thought, and the five senses) can never take a progressive (*-ing*) form in English.

- ✓ She **has been here** for an hour.
- ✗ She **has been being** here for an hour.
- ✓ They **have loved** each other since they met.
- ✗ They **have been loving** each other since they met.

For, All, Since & Ever Since

These time markers are used to show *how long* an action has been continuing for. They are commonly used with the present perfect and present perfect progressive tenses.

For and *all* show the **duration** of an action. *For* is more common than *all*.

- We have lived on Main Street **for 30 years**.
- She has been studying other languages **all her life**.

Since and *ever since* show the **starting point** of an action. *Since* is more common, but *ever since* emphasizes the duration more than *since*.

- They have been waiting for the package **since Tuesday**.
- He has been singing in a choir **ever since he was a toddler**.

Exercise 1

FOR & SINCE

Read about each situation below, and write a sentence using the present perfect progressive tense and *for* or *since*.

1. The baby is crying. She started to cry 20 minutes ago.

The baby has been crying for 20 minutes.

2. It is snowing. It began to snow last night.
-

3. The children are studying now. They started to study an hour ago.
-

4. Willie smokes. He started to smoke when he was a teenager.
-

5. Andrea works in a bank. She got her bank job last April.
-

6. Mrs. Neville teaches French. She started to teach French 15 years ago.
-

7. Sue and Joe are planning their vacation. They started planning last winter.
-

8. The mechanic is fixing my car. He started working on it this morning.
-

9. My classmates are taking a test. The test started two hours ago.
-

10. The employees are writing their reports. They started writing at 9:00 am.
-

Exercise 2

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Choose the correct verb from the word list to complete the following sentences. Use the present perfect progressive tense.

1. Maria has been waiting at the coffee shop for her boyfriend for the past half hour, but he still hasn't arrived.
2. The students _____ Spanish since the semester began.
3. I _____ on this report for the past two days.
4. You should take your umbrella when you go out. It _____ all day.
5. Your children _____ television all evening.
6. John's back hurts. He _____ heavy boxes all morning.
7. The students _____ in the classroom for 20 minutes, but the teacher hasn't come yet.
8. The girls _____ on the telephone for over an hour.
9. Frank _____ the same car for almost 20 years.
10. Mr. and Mrs. Barnes are very excited about going to China next summer. They _____ this trip for over a year.
11. That mailman _____ the mail in our neighborhood for nearly 25 years. He is going to retire soon.
12. Rita and Carly are at the mall. They _____ since the stores opened this morning.
13. My eyes are getting tired. I _____ all day.
14. Bill hopes to find a new job soon. He _____ in the paper and on the Internet every day for the past month.
15. Andrea is planning to call the doctor this afternoon. She _____ sick for several days.
16. Claire's eyes are red. She _____ all morning.

Word List:

- talk
- look
- lift
- work
- ~~wait~~
- feel
- rain
- deliver
- shop
- cry
- plan
- read
- drive
- study
- sit
- watch

Exercise 3

NEGATIVE & AFFIRMATIVE

Write sentences (first in the negative and then in the affirmative) using the words provided and the present perfect progressive tense. Follow the example given below.

1. Terry / study French / study German

Terry hasn't been studying French. He's been studying German.

2. Barbara / knit a sweater / knit a scarf
-

3. Ann / work overtime this week / go home early
-

4. Kevin / study for his exam / watch TV all evening
-

5. Jenny / send postcards to her friends / write emails
-

6. Robert / drive to work this week / take the bus
-

7. Lisa / feel well this week / cough a lot
-

8. Mrs. Anderson / clean the house / talk on the phone all morning
-

9. the children / do their homework / play cards
-

10. the Smiths / save for a house / shop for new furniture instead
-

Exercise 4

TELL ME WHY

A. Matching

Match the situations on the left with the causes on the right.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p><u> e </u> 1. Mary's eyes are very red.</p> <p><u> </u> 2. The streets are wet.</p> <p><u> </u> 3. The children aren't hungry now.</p> <p><u> </u> 4. He's out of breath.</p> <p><u> </u> 5. Carol's pants are dirty.</p> <p><u> </u> 6. Both boys have black eyes.</p> <p><u> </u> 7. The teacher's sweater is covered in chalk.</p> <p><u> </u> 8. Andrew coughs all the time.</p> <p><u> </u> 9. Lily's feet are sore.</p> <p><u> </u> 10. Donna feels great.</p> | <p>a) She's been leaning against the blackboard.</p> <p>b) She's been exercising all month.</p> <p>c) She's been dancing for hours.</p> <p>d) It's been raining for hours.</p> <p>e) She's been crying all night.</p> <p>f) He's been running for an hour.</p> <p>g) She's been working in the garden.</p> <p>h) They've been eating cookies all day.</p> <p>i) He's been smoking for years.</p> <p>j) They've been fighting.</p> |
|--|---|

B. Writing

Use the present perfect progressive tense and your own ideas to answer the following questions.

1. Why are you so tired?

all morning.

2. Why did Daniel's teacher phone Daniel's parents?

for the past month.

3. Why does it smell so good in the kitchen?

all afternoon.

4. Why haven't you finished your homework yet?

since I got home.

Exercise 5

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Use the correct question word (who, what, where, why, how long) and the present perfect progressive tense to make information questions. The **bold** words are the answers to the questions.

1. *How long has Ben been working for that company?*

Ben has been working for that company **for 20 years**.

2. _____

She has been talking to **her mother** for the past hour.

3. _____

Ruth has been waiting for Sara **for over an hour**.

4. _____

The boys have been **playing tennis** all afternoon.

5. _____

Annie has been waiting **in the coffee shop** for Robbie.

6. _____

She's been cooking all day **because she's having a big party tonight**.

7. _____

He's been walking to work all week **because he wants to get some exercise**.

8. _____

It's been snowing **since last night**.

9. _____

Mrs. Jones has been living in our old apartment since we moved out.

10. _____

Maria and John have been practicing **in the studio** all month.

Exercise 6

SCRAMBLED SENTENCES

Put the words below in the correct order to make grammatically correct sentences. Use the present perfect progressive tense.

1. has that he been for company working years for ten

He has been working for that company for ten years.

2. piano lessons has she since taking a been was child she
-

3. fishing since they the came have sun been up
-

4. has an father he his been for arguing hour with
-

5. have neighborhood we same in been since the living we were children
-

6. Alex since he been came from business sleeping his has home trip
-

7. been the since students doing they to came class have exercise this
-

8. Peter hockey has the since it been game watching began
-

9. Dan been Luke two playing have and for tennis hours
-

10. morning been to we presentations all listening have
-

Exercise 7

EVER SINCE

Use the information provided below to make sentences with the present perfect progressive tense and *ever since*.

1. John finished his business degree. Then he started to work for a large international company.

John has been working for a large international company ever since he finished his business degree.

2. Bonnie got a very bad flu. After that, she began to take vitamins.

3. Dave's car broke down. Then he began to walk to work.

4. Ellen's doctor told her to lose weight. Then she began to diet.

5. Mary's parents heard some bad news. Then they started to cry.

6. Diane's husband died of cancer. Then Diane started to volunteer at the hospital.

7. Ross got a new dog. Then he started to take long walks every day.

8. Wayne got skates for his tenth birthday. Then he started to play hockey.

9. Clara joined an exercise class. Then she started to lose weight.

10. Bob and Lisa retired. Then they started traveling.

Exercise 8

CLASS ACTIVITY

Walk around the room and interview your classmates. Complete the chart.

#	Find someone who...	Name
1	...has been living in this city for less than two years.	
2	...has been having trouble sleeping lately.	
3	...hasn't been feeling well this week.	
4	...has been taking music lessons for several years.	
5	...has been playing soccer since he/she was a young child.	
6	...has been studying English for a very short time.	
7	...has been planning a special trip for a long time.	
8	...has been dating the same person for more than six months.	
9	...has been waiting for an important phone call, letter, or email all week.	
10	...has been watching the same TV series every week for the past several months.	
11	...has been sitting in the same seat every day since this course began.	
12	...has been taking vitamins every day for many years.	
13	...has been exercising regularly for the past month.	
14	...hasn't been taking the bus to school this week.	
15	...has been wearing the same brand of lipstick for years.	
16	...has been driving the same car for over five years.	
17	...has been thinking about moving to a new place.	
18	...has been doing a lot of homework lately.	
19	...has been reading a good book this week.	
20	...has been looking forward to seeing friends this weekend.	

Exercise 10

PRESENT PERFECT & PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

Read the information in the chart below, and then write at least two sentences about each person using the present perfect and present perfect progressive tenses.

Person	Time Now	Activity in Progress	Began	Completed So Far
Doris	4:00 pm	writing emails	1:00 pm	20 emails
Judy	4:00 pm	meeting customers	early this morning	12 customers
Wayne	4:00 pm	playing tennis	3:00 pm	three games
Michael	4:00 pm	fixing computers	9:00 am	six computers
Bonnie	4:00 pm	baking	12:30 pm	two cakes and four dozen cookies

1. Doris

Doris has been writing emails for three hours.
Doris has been writing emails since 1:00.
She has written 20 emails so far.

4. Michael

2. Judy

5. Bonnie

3. Wayne

Exercise 11

QUIZ: PRESENT PERFECT VS. PRESENT PERFECT PROGRESSIVE

Complete the following sentences with the correct form of the verb in brackets (present perfect or present perfect progressive).

- I have been writing (write) emails since 10:00 this morning. So far, I have finished (finish) about 20.
- I love that restaurant. I _____ (eat) there many times.
- Go and wake your father up. He _____ (sleep) all afternoon.
- Laura is at the mall. She _____ (shop) all morning.
She _____ (buy) three pairs of shoes, two dresses, and a coat.
- They _____ (build) that office tower for almost two years.
So far, it _____ (cost) over \$200 million dollars.
- The boys _____ (fish) all afternoon. They _____ (catch) ten fish so far.
- Let's sit down. I'm tired. We _____ (dance) for hours.
- Kelly is standing on the corner. She _____ (wait) for her boyfriend for the past 20 minutes.
- There is a police car parked on the street across from my house.
I _____ (watch) it for over an hour, but nothing _____ (happen) yet.
- Please answer the phone. It _____ (ring) for the past five minutes.
- Anna _____ (be) in the hospital for over a month. She may come home next week.
- A: Sorry I'm late. B: That's okay. I _____ (not / wait) very long.
- It _____ (rain) steadily for the past two days.

Answer Key

Exercise 1

- The baby has been crying for 20 minutes.
- It has been snowing since last night.
- The children have been studying for an hour.
- Willie has been smoking since he was a teenager.
- Andrea has been working in a bank since last April.
- Mrs. Neville has been teaching French for 15 years.
- Sue and Joe have been planning their vacation since last winter.
- The mechanic has been working on my car since this morning.
- My classmates have been taking a test for two hours.
- The employees have been writing their reports since 9:00 am.
- Lisa hasn't been feeling well this week.
She's been coughing a lot.
- Mrs. Anderson hasn't been cleaning the house.
She's been talking on the phone all morning.
- The children haven't been doing their homework.
They've been playing cards.
- The Smiths haven't been saving for a house.
They've been shopping for new furniture instead.

Exercise 4

A. MATCHING

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. e | 3. h | 5. g | 7. a | 9. c |
| 2. d | 4. f | 6. j | 8. i | 10. b |

B. WRITING

Individual answers.

Exercise 5

- How long has Ben been working for that company?
- Who has she been talking to for the past hour?
- How long has Ruth been waiting for Sara?
- What have the boys been doing/playing all afternoon?
- Where has Annie been waiting all day?
- Why has she been cooking all day?
- Why has he been walking to work all week?
- How long has it been snowing?
- Who has been living in our old apartment since we moved out?
- Where have Maria and John been practicing all month?

(continued on the next page...)

Exercise 2

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. has been waiting | 9. has been driving |
| 2. have been studying | 10. have been planning |
| 3. have been working | 11. has been delivering |
| 4. has been raining | 12. have been shopping |
| 5. have been watching | 13. have been reading |
| 6. has been lifting | 14. has been looking |
| 7. have been sitting | 15. has been feeling |
| 8. have been talking | 16. has been crying |

Exercise 3

Encourage your students to use contractions for all or at least some of their answers.

- Terry hasn't been studying French.
He's been studying German.
- Barbara hasn't been knitting a sweater.
She's been knitting a scarf.
- Ann hasn't been working overtime this week.
She's been going home early.
- Kevin hasn't been studying for his exam.
He's been watching TV all evening.
- Jenny hasn't been sending postcards to her friends.
She's been writing emails.
- Robert hasn't been driving to work this week.
He's been taking the bus.

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 6

1. He has been working for that company for ten years.
2. She has been taking piano lessons since she was a child.
3. They have been fishing since the sun came up.
4. He has been arguing with his father for an hour.
5. We have been living in the same neighborhood since we were children.
6. Alex has been sleeping since he came home from his business trip.
7. The students have been doing this exercise since they came to class.
8. Peter has been watching the hockey game since it began.
9. Dan and Luke have been playing tennis for two hours.
10. We have been listening to presentations all morning.

Exercise 7

1. John has been working for a large international company ever since he finished his business degree.
2. Bonnie has been taking vitamins ever since she got a very bad flu.
3. Dave has been walking to work ever since his car broke down.
4. Ellen has been dieting ever since her doctor told her to lose weight.
5. Mary's parents have been crying ever since they heard some bad news.
6. Diane has been volunteering at the hospital ever since her husband died of cancer.
7. Ross has been taking long walks every day ever since he got a new dog.
8. Wayne has been playing hockey ever since he got skates for his tenth birthday.
9. Clara has been losing weight ever since she joined an exercise class.
10. They have been traveling ever since they retired.

Exercise 8

Answers will vary.

Exercise 9

Answers will vary.

Exercise 10

Answers may vary.

1. Doris has been writing emails for three hours. /
Doris has been writing emails since 1:00. /
She has written 20 emails so far.
2. Judy has been meeting customers since early this morning. /
She has met 12 customers so far.
3. Wayne has been playing tennis for an hour. /
Wayne has been playing tennis since 3:00. /
Wayne has played three games of tennis so far.
4. Michael has been fixing computers for seven hours. /
Michael has been fixing computers since 9:00. /
He has fixed six computers so far.
5. Bonnie has been baking for three and a half hours. /
Bonnie has been baking since 12:30. /
She has baked two cakes and four dozen cookies so far.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 11

1. have been writing, have finished
2. have eaten
3. has been sleeping
4. has been shopping, has (already) bought
5. have been building, has cost
6. have been fishing, have caught
7. have been dancing
8. has been waiting
9. have been watching, has happened
10. has been ringing
11. has been
12. haven't been waiting
13. has been raining

SPELLING NOTES:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Neighborhood*, *Traveling*, and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Neighbourhood*, *Travelling*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

1. Find more practice on the Present Perfect in our Grammar Practice Worksheets lesson: <https://ellii.com/lessons/grammar-practice-worksheets/1597-present-perfect>
2. Find past participle lists and cards in our Grammar & Usage resources: <https://ellii.com/resources>
3. For more information on Non-Action Verbs, see our Grammar & Usage resource: <https://ellii.com/resources/grammar-usage/2329-non-action-verbs-exceptions>