

## **The Perfect Continuous Form**

The Perfect Continuous form denotes an action in progress, whose duration before a definite moment in the present, past or future is expressed.

It is formed by means of the auxiliary verb *to be* in one of the perfect tenses and Participle I of the notional verb.

## **The Present Perfect Continuous**

### **§ 27. The formation of the Present Perfect Continuous.**

1. The Present Perfect Continuous is formed by means of the Present Perfect of the auxiliary verb *to be* and Participle I of the notional verb.

2. In the interrogative form the first auxiliary verb is placed before the subject.

In the negative form the negative particle *not* is placed after the first auxiliary verb.

Affirmative	Interrogative
I have been working He has been working She has been working We have been working You have been working They have been working	Have I been working? Has he been working? Has she been working? Have we been working? Have you been working? Have they been working?

Negative
I have not been working He has not been working She has not been working We have not been working You have not been working They have not been working

3. The contracted affirmative forms are:

- I've been working
- He's been working
- You've been working

The contracted negative forms are:

- I haven't been working
- He hasn't been working
- We haven't been working

4. The negative-interrogative forms are:

- { Has he not been working?
- { Hasn't he been working?
  
- { Have you not been working?
- { Haven't you been working?



## § 28. The use of the Present Perfect Continuous.

We distinguish two uses of the Present Perfect Continuous: the **Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive** and the **Present Perfect Continuous Exclusive**.

1. The Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive is used to denote an action which began in the past, has been going on up to the present and is still going on.

The Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive is generally used with *since* (denoting the starting point of the action), *for* (denoting the whole period of duration), *these two days*, etc. (If the conjunction *since* introduces a clause, the verb in this clause is in the Past Indefinite.)

I **have been looking** out for your white dress for the last ten minutes. (*Bennett*)

Ever since I saw you last I **have been thinking, thinking**. (*Dreiser*)

As has been stated above (see § 18.3) the Present Perfect Inclusive is used to denote an action which began in the past, has been going on up to the present and is still going on with verbs not admitting of the Continuous form, in negative sentences and with certain non-terminative verbs.

With verbs not admitting of the Continuous form the Present Perfect Inclusive is the only tense possible.

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**N o t e.** In colloquial English the verbs *to want* and *to wish* are often to be found in the Perfect Continuous form, though, as stated above, they are not used in the Continuous form.

I **have been wishing** to speak to you ever since you returned. (*Collins*)

With verbs in the negative form the Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive can be used, but it is far less common than the Present Perfect Inclusive.

With certain non-terminative verbs both the Present Perfect Inclusive and the Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive are used.

We **have worked** at the problem for several months. (The fact is emphasized.)

We **have been working and working** at the problem for months and I don't think we are likely to solve it. (*Locke*) (The process is emphasized.)

The Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive is rendered in Russian by the present:

I **have been teaching** at this school for 20 years. — Я **препо-  
даю** в этой школе 20 лет.



2. The Present Perfect Continuous Exclusive denotes an action which was recently in progress but is no longer going on at the present moment.

You are not well to-day. You look distressed. You **have been weeping**. (*Dickens*)

The Present Perfect Continuous Exclusive is used to express repeated actions in the past.

How **have** you **been spending** your money?

I **have been buying** pictures. (*Locke*)

I **have been getting** letters from him.

The Present Perfect Continuous Exclusive is often used with an emotional colouring.

I suppose you **have been telling** lies again. (*Marryat*)

The Present Perfect Continuous Exclusive is rendered in Russian by the past imperfective.

Your eyes are red. You **have been crying**. — У вас покраснели глаза. Вы **плакали**.

## § 29. The Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive and the Present Continuous.

Students should take care not to mix up the Present Perfect Continuous and the Present Continuous: the Present Continuous is used to denote an action going on at the present moment, no previous duration is expressed. The Present Perfect Continuous Inclusive is used when the previous duration of the action is expressed.

I **am reading** *Dombey and Son*.

I **have been reading** *Dombey and Son* for three days.

There is no difference in the translation:

Я **читаю** роман «Домби и сын».

Я **читаю** роман «Домби и сын» три дня.

## § 30. The Present Perfect and the Present Perfect Continuous Exclusive.

The Present Perfect denotes a completed action while with the Present Perfect Continuous Exclusive there is an implication of incompleteness.

He **has made** some experiments. — Он сделал несколько опытов.

He has **been making** experiments. — Он делал опыты.

Why are your lips black? I **have been eating** blackberries. I **have eaten** a whole plateful. — Я ел чернику. Я съел целую тарелку.

She is walking up and down the room thinking of the letter she **has been writing** and wondering how she should finish it.

She is going to post the letter she **has just written**.