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present perfect continuous

FORM

affirmative

I / You / We / They **have** ('ve) **been** **watching** TV.
He / She / It **has** ('s)

negative

I / You / We / They **have not** (haven't) **been** **studying**.
He / She / It **has not** (hasn't)

questions

Have I / you / we / they **been** **working**?
Has he / she / it

short answers

Yes, I / we / they have. No, I / we / they haven't.
Yes, he / she / it has. No, he / she / it hasn't.

USE

We use present perfect continuous to talk about actions in progress from the past up to the present (often with *for* or *since*).

We've been studying Russian for three years.
I've been doing homework since five o'clock.

The action may be recently finished or continuing.

They've been waiting for an hour. You're late. (The waiting is finished.)
They've been waiting for an hour and he still isn't here. (The waiting continues.)

We sometimes use the present perfect continuous to emphasise an action repeated many times, or the length of time of an action.

I've been phoning you all day. Where were you?
He's been feeling ill for over a week and he isn't getting better.

present perfect simple or continuous?

When we refer to the duration of an action or situation, there is often very little difference in meaning between the present perfect simple and present perfect continuous.

How long have you worked / been working here?
I've worked / been working here for five years.

The tense we use often depends on where we want to focus – on the activity itself or the result of the action.

'Why are your hands dirty?' 'I've been fixing my bike'. (focus on the activity)
'You look pleased.' 'Yes, I've fixed my bike.' (focus on the finished result).

If the result of an action is a quantity (how much or how many) we do not use the continuous form.

I've done three exercises so far. NOT I've been doing three exercises so far.
They've been saving for a year and they've saved over a thousand pounds.

We do not usually use the continuous form with verbs which refer to states (eg *to be, to want, to have, etc*)

I've had a cold for the last week. NOT I've been having a cold for the last week.
You've been depressed since Christmas. NOT You've been being depressed...