


UNIT 16 Present perfect continuous (I have been doing)

a) Study this example situation:




Is it raining?
No, it isn't but the ground is wet.
It has been raining.
This is the *present perfect continuous* tense:
I/we/they/you **have** (= I've etc.) } **been doing**
he/she/it **has** (= he's etc.) }

We use the present perfect continuous when we talk about an action (quite a long action) which began in the past and has recently stopped or just stopped. Here are some examples:

- You're out of breath. **Have you been running?**
- That man over there is bright red. I think he's **been sunbathing.**
- Why are your clothes so dirty? **What have you been doing?**
- I've **been talking** to Tom about your problem and he thinks ...

b) We also use the present perfect continuous to ask or say how long something has been happening. This time the action or situation began in the past and is still happening or has just stopped. Study this example:



It is raining now. It began to rain two hours ago and it is still raining.
It has been raining for two hours.
We often use the present perfect continuous in this way, especially with **how long, for** and **since.**

Here are some more examples:

- **How long have you been learning English?**
- **They've been waiting here for over an hour.**
- **I've been watching television since 2 o'clock.**
- **George hasn't been feeling very well recently.**
- **Have you been working hard today?**

You can also use the present perfect continuous (with **how long, for** and **since**) for actions repeated over a period of time:

- **She has been playing tennis since she was eight.**
- **How long have you been smoking?**

For more information about the present perfect + **since/for**, see Units 18-19.

For the difference between the present perfect simple and continuous, see Units 17-18.

UNIT 16 Exercises

16.1 In this exercise you have to read the situation and then write a sentence with the present perfect continuous (I have been doing).

Example: Tom is out of breath. (he / run) He has been running.

- 1 Ann is very tired. (she / work / hard)
 - 2 Bob has a black eye and Bill has a cut lip. (Bob and Bill / fight)
 - 3 George has just come back from the beach. He is very red. (he / lie / in the sun)
 - 4 Janet is hot and tired. (she / play / tennis)
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16.2 This time you have to ask a question for each situation.

Example: Your friend's hands are covered in oil. (you / work / on the car?)

Have you been working on the car?

- 1 You see a little boy. His eyes are red and watery. (you / cry?)
 - 2 You have just arrived to meet your friend who is waiting for you. (you / wait / long?)
 - 3 Your friend comes in. His face and hands are very dirty. (what / you / do?)
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16.3 Now you have to say how long something has been happening.

Example: It is raining now. It began raining two hours ago.

It has been raining for two hours.

- 1 Kevin is studying. He began studying three hours ago.
He for three hours.
 - 2 I'm learning Spanish. I started learning Spanish in December.
I since December.
 - 3 Ann is looking for a job. She began looking six months ago.
She for six months.
 - 4 Mary is working in London. She started working there on 18 January.
..... since 18 January.
 - 5 George smokes. He started smoking five years ago.
..... for five years.
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16.4 In this exercise you have to ask questions with how long.

Example: It is raining. How long has it been raining?

- 1 My foot is hurting. How long
- 2 Mike plays chess. How
- 3 Jim sells washing machines.
- 4 Tom is living in High Street.