

## 6 Present perfect continuous and expressing duration, for and since

### 6.1 Present perfect continuous and expressing duration

**USE**

- The present perfect simple and continuous are used to express duration. The present perfect continuous looks at the continuous situation itself, while the present perfect simple usually describes something that is completed or achieved or has only just finished.  
*I have been in the army for three years. (I'm still in the army.)*  
*He has had this car since June. (He still has the same car.)*  
*I've been teaching English since I left university. (Teaching is my present job.)*  
*I'm sorry I'm late. Have you been waiting long?*
- As regards the situation expressed by these two tenses, particular attention must be paid to dynamic and stative, positive and negative verbs:

	Present perfect simple	Present perfect continuous
In general the differences represent the usual distinctions between simple and continuous tenses.	<i>I have read that Harry Potter book. = I read the book at some unspecified time in the past.</i>  <i>I have lived in London since I was born. = It is a permanent situation.</i>	<i>I have been reading that Harry Potter book. = I am currently reading the book.</i>  <i>I have been living in London since February. = It is probably not a permanent situation.</i>
Dynamic verbs when the action is still in progress.	<b>X</b>	<i>I have been playing tennis a lot this week. (I'm going to play again.)</i>  Compare to: <i>I have played tennis a lot this week. (I'm probably not going to play again before the week is over.)</i>  <i>I have been studying English since 3 o'clock. (I am still studying.)</i>

Dynamic verbs when the action was continuing up to this moment and has literally just finished.	<b>X</b>	<i>I have been studying English since 3 o'clock. (I just stopped.)</i>  'Why are you so sweaty?' 'I have been running.' (The focus is on an action that has just finished, whose effects are still visible in the present.)
Time expressions when we want to imply a duration.	<i>for, all day/night/week, all one's life, all the time, since + past simple</i>	
Questions	<i>How long have they been married?</i>	<i>How long have you been watching TV?</i>
Negative statements The present perfect continuous is not generally used in negative sentences. The simple form is preferred.	<i>I haven't studied English for three years.</i>	<b>X</b>

**! ALTERNATIVES FOR EXPRESSING DURATION**

<i>I haven't seen Tom for two weeks.</i>	
<i>It is two weeks since I saw Tom.</i>	<i>The last time I saw Tom was two weeks ago. I (last) saw Tom two weeks ago.</i>
<i>How long is it since you (last) saw Tom?</i>	<i>How long ago did you see Tom? When did you last see Tom?</i>

- These are the only possible constructions when there are verbs that refer to a completed action and there is no continuity in time. Such verbs include, for example, **arrive, begin, die, finish, leave, start, stop** and with them the present perfect simple/continuous + *for/since* cannot be used.

### 6.2 For and since

**USE**

The present perfect simple and continuous are used with two prepositions to speak about the time during which the action takes place:

For	Since
It is used with a <b>period of time</b> that can be quantified (seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, etc.): <i>for three hours, for two days, for ages, for ten years, for a long time, for long, etc.</i>	It is used with a <b>point in time</b> that is the starting moment of the action: <i>since 2 o'clock, since May, since 1990, etc.</i>
It is <b>omitted</b> with expressions beginning <b>with all</b> . <i>They have been singing all night.</i>	It can also be used with a <b>clause + past simple</b> . <i>I haven't seen him since I was a child.</i>