

# B2 —

## Untangling the present perfect tense aspects

Learn the differences and similarities between the 'present perfect simple' —and— 'present perfect continuous' tense aspects

# Lesson introduction

In this lesson, we will explore two important English tense structures: the **present perfect simple** and the **present perfect continuous**. These tenses are commonly used to talk about actions, changes, and situations that started in the past and are still relevant now, which makes them especially useful when discussing ongoing global issues such as climate change.

You will see that while both structures connect the past to the present, they do not always express the same meaning. Sometimes the focus is on **results or facts**, and other times it is on **duration, activity, or ongoing change**.

Before we look more closely at how the **present perfect simple** and **present perfect continuous** can change meaning depending on the sentence, we will first step back and review two key verb types: **action verbs** and **state verbs**. Understanding the difference between these verb types will make it much easier to choose the correct tense and express your ideas clearly and naturally.

# One-sentence rule

**Action verbs** can use both perfect forms, depending on focus, but **state verbs** usually stay in the present perfect simple because states don't have an action in progress.



# Action verbs

## What they are:

- Action verbs describe things we do. They show movement, activity, or effort. You can usually see or imagine the action.
- Examples of action verbs: work, run, write, build, study, clean, talk, play

## How they function in a sentence — action verbs:

- Show what the subject does,
- Can be used in simple, continuous, and perfect tenses,
- Often answer the question: “What is happening?”

## Sentence examples:

- “She works in finance.”
- “They are building a new house.”
- “I have been studying English for two years.”

**KEY IDEA: Action verbs can happen over time, so they work well in continuous forms.**

# State verbs

## What they are:

- State verbs describe conditions, feelings, thoughts, possession, or senses. They show how something is, not what someone is doing.
- Examples of state verbs: know, believe, like, love, hate, want, need, own, belong, understand

## How they function in a sentence — state verbs:

- describe situations or states [They often answer the question: “How is someone or something?”]
- usually do not change or move
- are not normally used in continuous forms

## Sentence examples:

- She likes her job.
- They own a small business.
- I have known him for years.

**KEY IDEA: States don't happen in progress, so they usually stay in simple tenses.**

# Action verbs change in meaning [PPS / PPC]



# Using action verbs with PPS and PPC

With actions verbs, the **present perfect simple** focuses on *what is done*, while the **present perfect continuous** focuses on *what has been happening*.

## Action verbs (doable, dynamic, visible):

- Examples: work, study, wait, read, write, run, build, clean

# Action verbs in PPS versus PPC [1/6]

## 1. Work

- a. PPS: *“I’ve worked here for five years.”* > states the fact or experience
- b. PPC: *“I’ve been working here for five years.”* > highlights the ongoing effort or commitment

## 2. Study

- a. PPS: *“I’ve studied French at university.”* > focuses on completed learning
- b. PPC: *“I’ve been studying French for two years.”* > focuses on the learning process

## 3. Wait

- a. PPS: *“I’ve waited long enough.”* > emphasises the decision or result
- b. PPC: *“I’ve been waiting for over an hour.”* > emphasises duration and impatience

# Action verbs in PPS versus PPC [2/6]

## 4. Read

- a. PPS: *"I've read three articles this morning."* > highlights quantity or completion
- b. PPC: *"I've been reading this article for an hour."* > highlights time spent and activity

## 5. Write

- a. PPS: *"I've written the report."* > shows a finished result
- b. PPC: *"I've been writing the report all morning."* > shows an unfinished or ongoing process

## 6. Run

- a. PPS: *"I've run five kilometres today."* > focuses on achievement
- b. PPC: *"I've been running every morning this week."* > focuses on habit or repeated activity

# Action verbs in PPS versus PPC [3/6]

## 7. Build

- a. PPS: “*They’ve built a new school in the area.*” > highlights the completed project
- b. PPC: “*They’ve been building a new school since March.*” > highlights the construction process

## 8. Clean

- a. PPS: “*I’ve cleaned the kitchen*” > emphasises the result
- b. PPC: “*I’ve been cleaning the kitchen all morning.*” > emphasises time, effort, and activity

## 9. Do

- a. PPS: “*I’ve done my homework.*” > focuses on finished result
- b. PPC: “*I’ve been doing my homework.*” > activity in progress (maybe unfinished)

# Action verbs in PPS versus PPC [4/6]

## 10. Make

- a. PPS: *"I've made a decision."* > single outcome
- b. PPC: *"I've been making decisions all day."* > repeated effort or pressure

## 11. Try

- a. PPS: *"I've tried that method before."* > emphasises experience
- b. PPC: *"I've been trying to fix the problem."* > ongoing attempt, often unsuccessful so far

## 12. Use

- a. PPS: *"I've used this software many times."* > focuses on familiarity
- b. PPC: *"I've been using this software all morning."* > recent or current activity

# Action verbs in PPS versus PPC [5/6]

## 13. Learn

- a. PPS: *“I’ve learned a lot this year.”* > knowledge gained
- b. PPC: *“I’ve been learning a lot this year.”* > learning still happening

## 14. Practice

- a. PPS: *“I’ve practiced this presentation.”* > readiness
- b. PPC: *“I’ve been practicing all afternoon.”* > effort and time invested

## 15. Teach

- a. PPS: *“I’ve taught English for ten years.”* > career fact
- b. PPC: *“I’ve been teaching English for ten years.”* > lived, ongoing professional identity

# Action verbs in PPS versus PPC [6/6]

## 16. Play

- a. PPS: *"I've played tennis since I was a child."* > long-term ability/experience
- b. PPC: *"I've been playing tennis a lot recently."* > recent habit or trend

## 17. Watch

- a. PPS: *"I've watched that film."* > completed viewing
- b. PPC: *"I've been watching that series."* > ongoing consumption

## 18. Talk

- a. PPS: *"I've talked to my manager."* > conversation completed
- b. PPC: *"I've been talking to my manager."* > repeated or ongoing discussions

# State verbs and PPS

## State verbs (mental, emotional, possession, senses)

Examples: know, believe, like, love, hate, understand, own, belong, want

State verbs (a.k.a. Stative verbs or verbs of preference) are not normally used in the continuous — so they are used almost only in the present perfect simple tense aspect.

PPS: *“I’ve known her for years.”* ✓

PPC: *“I’ve been knowing her for years.”* ✗



# HearSay Learn audio activities

This next section of activities is based on a **HearSay Learn audio track**. These slides include the **HearSay Learn logo** in the top-right corner so you can easily identify them.

## Want to Listen to the Audio?

To access the track:

- Click the shareable link on the slide, or
- Scan the QR code using your mobile phone.

This will open the **HearSay Learn WhatsApp** application, where you can listen to the audio as many times as you like.

## Prefer Not to Use **HearSay Learn**?

No problem. If you'd rather skip the audio-based tasks, simply move ahead to the slides without the **HearSay Learn logo**. All essential practice activities are still included.

## **Elucidated English** x **HearSay Learn**

**Elucidated English** is an official partner of **HearSay Learn**.

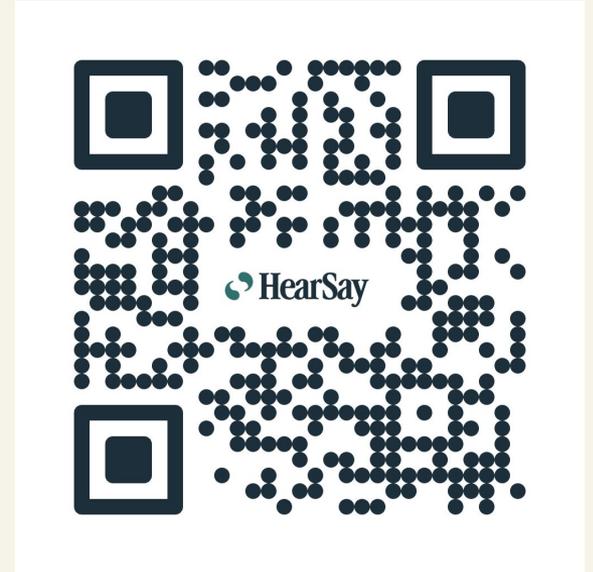
If you enjoy the audio experience, **HearSay Learn** offers affordable subscription options that allow you to:

- Listen to tracks on repeat
- Improve your pronunciation
- Strengthen listening skills naturally
- Train your ear in real conversational English





# “What’s Been Happening with the Climate?”



[Click here to listen to the conversation](#) (or scan the QR code, above)

\*\*\* *British accent*



# Comprehension questions

1. Why does Ethan mention the recent heat at the beginning of the conversation?
2. According to Sarah, what have scientists been saying about global temperatures?
3. How does Ethan feel about the actions world leaders have been taking so far?
4. What two things does Sarah say governments have been doing, and why does she find this insufficient?
5. What have coastal communities been doing in response to climate change?
6. Why does Sarah say organisations like hers have been pushing for urgent policy changes?



**Thank you for your support**

---

**YouTube: @elucidatedenglish**