

Present Perfect Simple and Continuous small talk

Part One: Small talk with people you know

Ask suitable questions or pairs of questions from below, using the right Present Perfect tense each time. Other tenses are sometimes possible (with different meanings), but just use Present Perfect Simple or Present Perfect Continuous. Sometimes both tenses are possible, so you can pick either one. The questions after dashes are follow-up questions, or you can ask other follow-up questions to get more details if you like.

How _____ (your day be) so far?

How _____ (your week be) so far?

Long time no see. How _____ (you be)?

_____ (you be) busy recently/ this week?

_____ (you have) many meetings today/ this week?

What are you working on at the moment?

- _____ (you make) much progress with that?

- How long _____ (you work) on that?

How was your weekend?/ Did you do anything nice at the weekend?

- I _____ (never go) to.... How was it?/ Would you recommend it?

How was your evening?/ Did you do anything nice last night?

- I _____ (never hear) of... What/ Where/ What kind of...?

(You are looking good.) _____ (you change) your hair?/

(You are looking good.) _____ (you lose) weight?/

(You are looking good.) _____ (you work) out?/

(You are looking good.) _____ (you buy) some new glasses?

(You look awful/ terrible.) _____ (you not sleep) well?/

(You look awful/ terrible.) _____ (you catch) a cold?/

(You look awful/ terrible.) _____ (you do) too much overtime?

(Wow/ Oh dear/ Oh my goodness!) _____ (you have) an accident?/

(Wow/ Oh dear/ Oh my goodness!) _____ (you break) your arm?

(I know you are a fan of murder mysteries/ domestic dramas/ sitcoms/...).

_____ (you watch) the latest series of...?/

(I know you are a fan of superhero movies/ thrillers/ rom-coms/...).

_____ (you see)...?

Fill all the gaps above with a Present Perfect tense. When both are possible, write both.

What are the differences in meaning between these pairs of tenses?

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Suggested answers

Other (non-Present Perfect) tenses may be possible, but if there is only one Present Perfect form below, the other Present Perfect tense is probably not okay.

How _____ has your day been _____ so far?

How _____ has your week been _____ so far?

Long time no see. How _____ have you been _____ ?

_____ Have you been _____ busy recently/ this week?

_____ Have you had _____ many meetings today/ this week?

What are you working on at the moment?

- _____ Have you made/ Have you been making _____ much progress?
- How long _____ have you been working _____ on that?

How was your weekend?/ Did you do anything nice at the weekend?

- I _____ have never been _____ to.... How was it?/ Would you recommend it?

How was your evening?/ Did you do anything nice last night?

- I _____ 've never heard _____ (never hear) of... What/ Where/ What kind of...?

(You are looking good.) _____ Have you changed _____ your hair?/

(You are looking good.) _____ Have you lost _____ weight?/

(You are looking good.) _____ Have you been working _____ out?/

(You are looking good.) _____ Have you bought _____ some new glasses?

(You look awful/ terrible.) _____ Haven't you been sleeping _____ well?/

(You look awful/ terrible.) _____ Have you caught _____ a cold?/

(You look awful/ terrible.) _____ Have you been doing _____ too much overtime?

(Wow/ Oh dear/ Oh my goodness!) _____ Have you had _____ an accident?/

(Wow/ Oh dear/ Oh my goodness!) _____ Have you broken _____ your arm?

(I know you are a fan of murder mysteries/ domestic dramas/ sitcoms/...). _____ Have you been watching/ Have you watched _____ the latest series of...?/ (I know you are a fan of superhero movies/ thrillers/ rom-coms/...). _____ Have you seen _____...?

What are the differences between these pairs?

Have you made/ Have you been making _____ much progress?

(I know you are a fan of...) _____ Have you been watching/Have you watched _____...?

Part Two: Small talk when meeting for the first time

Imagine that you are meeting your partner for the first time. Start a conversation with them using as many suitable questions from below as you can. Some of the questions are (rather or very) unsuitable, so be careful which questions you choose.

Useful phrases for introducing yourself/ starting conversations

“You must be...”

“Can I introduce myself? I’m...”

“I don’t think we’ve met.”

Useful polite phrases when you meet someone for the first time

“Nice/ Pleased/ Glad/ Delighted to meet you.”

“We have emailed many times before, but it’s so nice to finally meet you face to face.”

Useful phrases for ending conversations

“Well, I’d love to chat more but... so I’ll...”

“It was nice to meet you./ It was great meeting you.”

Cross off any questions below which are not good small talk questions when you meet someone for the first time. Then compare with the answers.

Use the blanked version of the worksheet to do the same meeting people roleplay, this time also making sure you use the right tenses.

Fill the gaps with the right tenses, then check with the first worksheet.

What are good and bad things to ask about when you meet someone for the first time?

Cross off bad topics below, then put the good ones in order, from (1) for the best topic.

- Accommodation (hotel, etc)
- Appearance (clothes, etc)
- Company
- Family
- Food and drink
- Gossip/ Rumours
- Movies and television
- Negative things
- Nightlife
- Personal hygiene (bathing etc)
- Places
- Possessions
- Sport
- Studies
- The news
- Travels
- Weather
- Work

Good and bad Present Perfect questions when meeting new people

- Sorry to keep you waiting. Have you been waiting long?
- Have you been to (*name of this city/ country/ event*) before?
- How long have you been wearing that shirt?
- How long have you been working here/ there/ for...?
- How long have you been living in (*name of city*)?
- Have you been to any/ many other countries?
- Have you had many jobs?
- I've been looking for a (*name of possession*) like that. Where did you get it?
- Have you been watching (*name of TV series*)?
- Have you seen (*name of movie*)?
- Haven't you had any children yet?
- Have you been to any/ many hostess bars?
- Your English is very good. How long have you been learning?
- Have you ever lived abroad?
- I work for (*company name*). Have you (ever) heard of us?
- I'm afraid I've never heard of (*name of company*). What does your company do?
- Have you ever thought about changing jobs?
- Have you come far today?
- How long have you been in (*name of this place*)?
- Has a head-hunter ever approached you?
- Have you had many complaints about...?/ Have you been having many complaints about...?
- I guess you have been really busy since...
- How long have you been working on that/ on (*name of project*)?
- How have you been coping with the weather/ humidity/ traffic here?
- Have you had a bath today?
- I heard that/ I read that you have had some problems with/ have been having some problems with... How's that going now?
- Have you ever had food poisoning?
- Have you ever tried (*name of food*)?
- How has your stay in (*name of place*) been so far?
- I've been reading all the news about... What do you think about it?
- Have you visited (*name of famous place in this city*) yet?
- I guess you've been meeting/ you have met all our competitors too while you are here. What did they say?
- Have you heard the news about the... virus? Doesn't it worry you?
- I guess you've been sweating a lot since you got here. Is it this humid in your country?
- You look terrible. Haven't you been sleeping well?/ Have you caught a cold?/ Have you been suffering from jet lag?/ Have you been overworking?

Suggested answers

The ones in **bold** are probably not suitable.

- Sorry to keep you waiting. Have you been waiting long?
- Have you been to *(name of this city/ country/ event)* before?
- **How long have you been wearing that shirt?**
- How long have you been working here/ there/ for...?
- How long have you been living in *(name of city)*?
- Have you been to any/ many other countries?
- **Have you had many jobs?**
- I've been looking for a *(name of possession)* like that. Where did you get it?
- Have you been watching *(name of TV series)*?
- Have you seen *(name of movie)*?
- **Haven't you had any children yet?**
- **Have you been to any/ many hostess bars?**
- Your English is very good. How long have you been learning?
- Have you ever lived abroad?
- I work for *(company name)*. Have you (ever) heard of us?
- I'm afraid I've never heard of *(name of company)*. What does your company do?
- **Have you ever thought about changing jobs?**
- Have you come far today?
- How long have you been in *(name of this place)*?
- **Has a head-hunter ever approached you?**
- **Have you had many complaints about...?/ Have you been having many complaints about...?**
- I guess you have been really busy since...
- How long have you been working on that/ on *(name of project)*?
- How have you been coping with the weather/ humidity/ traffic here?
- **Have you had a bath today?**
- **I heard that/ I read that you have had some problems with/ have been having some problems with... How's that going now?**
- **Have you ever had food poisoning?**
- Have you ever tried *(name of food)*?
- How has your stay in *(name of place)* been so far?
- **I've been reading/ I've read all the news about... What do you think about it?**
- Have you visited *(name of famous place in this city)* yet?
- **I guess you've been meeting/ you have met all our competitors too while you are here. What did they say?**
- **Have you heard the news about the... virus? Doesn't it worry you?**
- **I guess you've been sweating a lot since you got here. Is it this humid in your country?**
- **You look terrible. Haven't you been sleeping well?/ Have you caught a cold?/ Have you been suffering from jet lag?/ Have you been overworking?**

Blanked version

- Sorry to keep you waiting. _____ (you wait) long?
- _____ (you go) to (*name of this city/ country/ event*) before?
- How long _____ (you wear) that shirt?
- How long _____ (you work) here/ there/ for...?
- How long _____ (you live) in (*name of city*)?
- _____ (you go) to any/ many other countries?
- _____ (you have) many jobs?
- I _____ (look) for a (*name of possession*) like that. Where did you get it?
- _____ (you watch) (*name of TV series*)?
- _____ (you see) (*name of movie*)?
- _____ (you not have) any children yet?
- _____ (you go) to any/ many hostess bars?
- Your English is very good. How long _____ (you learn)?
- _____ (you ever live) abroad?
- I work for (*company name*). _____ (you ever hear) of us?
- I'm afraid I _____
(never hear) of (*name of company*). What does your company do?
- _____ (you ever think) about changing jobs?
- _____ (you come) far today?
- How long _____ (you be) in (*name of this place*)?
- _____ (a head-hunter ever approach) you?
- _____ (you have) many complaints about...?
- I guess you _____ (be) really busy since...
- How long _____ (you work) on that/ on (*name of project*)?
- How _____ (you cope) with the weather/ humidity/ traffic here?
- _____ (you have) a bath today?
- I heard that/ I read that you _____
(have) some problems with... How's that going now?
- _____ (you ever have) food poisoning?
- _____ (you ever try) (*name of food*)?
- I _____ (read) all the news about... What do you think about it?
- _____ (you visit) (*name of famous place in this city*) yet?
- I guess you _____
(meet) all our competitors too while you are here. What did they say?
- _____ (you hear) the news about the... virus? Doesn't it worry you?
- I guess you _____
(sweat) a lot since you got here. Is it this humid in your country?
- You look terrible. _____ (you not sleep) well?!
- You look terrible. _____ (you catch) a cold?!
- You look terrible. _____ (you suffer) from jet lag?!
- You look terrible. _____ (you overwork)?