A Past simple or present perfect?
The past simple is used to describe actions in a completed time period.
The present perfect is used when the time period includes the present.
I lived in Milan many years ago.
(completed: now I live in another place)
I've lived in Milan since 2008.
(a situation that started in the past and continues in the present: I still live there)
I've been to Milan several times.
(life experience)
My boss has agreed to your proposal.
(present result of a past action)
Time phrases used with the past simple (unit 3C) refer to a particular point in the past: yesterday, last month.
Time phrases used with the present perfect (unit 5C) link the past to the present: since, never, this month.
The choice of tense often depends on the situation and where our attention is.
Good news! We've won the contract!
(recent news: the event is present in my mind)
So, we won the contract, and then ...
(telling a story: the event feels distant in my mind)

B Present simple or present perfect?
The present simple is used for permanent facts and states, and regular habits.
The present perfect makes a connection between past and present.
I work here.
(a permanent state: I work here every day)
I've worked here for two years.
(I started two years ago and still work here now)

C Present perfect continuous: form
The present perfect continuous is formed with the present perfect of be, and the -ing form of the verb. Negatives are formed with not.
I've been (haven't been) waiting here for more than an hour.
She's been (hasn't been) waiting here for ages.
Questions are formed by inverting the subject and have.
Have you been waiting long?
Has she been waiting long?

D Present perfect continuous: uses
The present perfect continuous describes an action or situation in progress from the past up to the present.
Production at this site has been increasing steadily since we started here five years ago.
The present perfect continuous often emphasizes the length of time of the action.
I've been working on this report all week.
The present perfect continuous can be used for repeated actions.
I've been calling her all afternoon, but she's always in a meeting.
The action may be finished or continuing; we only know by the situation.
You're late! I've been waiting here for ages!
(the waiting is finished now)
I've been waiting for ages. Where is she?
(I will continue waiting)

E Present perfect continuous: time expressions
Typical time expressions used with the present perfect continuous include: all day, for months, for ages, recently, over the last few years, since, for.

F Present perfect or present perfect continuous?
Sometimes there is no difference in meaning between the present perfect and present perfect continuous.
I've worked/ been working here for two years.
The choice of tense often depends on where our attention is.
We use the present perfect if our attention is on the present result.
I've written the report. Here it is.
(the finished report is in my mind)
We use the present perfect continuous if our attention is on the action in progress.
I've been writing the report. I'm exhausted.
(the act of writing is in my mind)
If we give details of how many or how much, we do not use a continuous form.
I've written three reports this week.
I've done a lot of research on this company.

See page 243 for an overview of the English verb tense system.
6.1 Underline the correct words.

1 Yesterday I phoned/I’ve phoned the bank about our overdraft.
2 I work/I have worked here since the end of last year.
3 I work/I have worked from home one day a week.
4 I’m enjoying the conference. I made/I have made a lot of useful contacts.
5 I saw/I’ve seen Hugh Hopper a few days ago – he sends his regards.
6 We went/We have been to an interesting seminar last week.
7 Today has been/was really busy – and it’s only lunchtime!
8 Today has been/was really busy. It’s 7 pm – I’m going home.
9 I’m sorry but Patricia left/has left the office an hour ago.
10 Patricia? No, she isn’t here right now. She left/has left the office.

6.2 Put the verbs in brackets into either the present simple, past simple or present perfect.

1 The company is doing very well. Last year sales went up (go up) 15%, and so far this year they have gone up (go up) another 12%.
2 We operate all over Latin America. Recently we set up (set up) branches in Peru and Colombia.
3 (you/see) my laptop? I’m sure I left (leave) it here earlier.
4 This (not look) like the right block. Are you sure we came (come) to the right address?
5 I never/speak) to him, but I speak (speak) to his assistant on the phone yesterday.
6 I work (work) for WorldCom since last year, but now I want (want) to change jobs. You hear (you/hear) of anyone taking on new staff?

6.3 In each mini-dialogue put one verb into the present perfect simple and the other into the present perfect continuous. Use contractions where possible.

1 A: What’s the matter? You look worried!
   B: Yes, I am. I’ve been looking at (look at) the contract in detail, and I’ve noticed (notice) a lot of potential problems.
2 A: I call (call) Carol all day, but it goes straight to voicemail.
   B: I expect she goes (go) to Head Office.
3 A: ‘Tosca’ is coming to the Opera House. (you see) it?
   B: Not yet, but I look forward (look forward) to it for ages.
      Shall we go together?
4 A: How long (you produce) cars at this site?
   B: About four years. We invested (invest) around twenty million dollars in plant and machinery.

“Oh, and your feelings have been trying to get in touch with you.”
Exercises

Section A 6.4 Put the verbs into the correct form of the past simple or present perfect simple. Use contractions where possible.

VICTORIA: Hi, Sue. I haven’t seen (not/see) you for ages!
SUE: Hi, Victoria, nice to see you again. No, you’re right, I haven’t (not/be) in touch with anyone recently.
VICTORIA: So what have you been up to?
SUE: You know I leave (not/be) my job in January so that I could go freelance as a graphic designer?
VICTORIA: Yes, I remember you talked (a lot) about that last year.
SUE: Well, it’s been (be) a really difficult year so far. I never did (never/do) anything like this before and it’s much harder than I imagined. You’ve ever been (be) self-employed?
VICTORIA: No, never, although I often think (about) it. So why is it (be) so difficult?
SUE: There’s a lot of insecurity. At the beginning I have (have) two or three good clients. These are people that I know (know) for many years. They’re still with me. But apart from that nothing really.

Section A 6.5 Complete the text about technology stocks by putting the verbs into the correct form of the past simple or present perfect.

MARKET REPORT a rocky road for tech stocks

European investors have watched (watch) US stock markets nervously over the last few months. The problems with US technology and telecomms stocks begin (begin) last March, and since then share prices at companies like Intel, HP and Apple crash (crash). Over the summer all these giants announce (announce) lower than expected profits, and investors fear that in the current economic climate demand for their products peak (peak). Now it’s the turn of European stocks, and on Monday stocks in Germany’s SAP and Finland’s Nokia fall (fall) sharply. SAP be (be) down 4%.

But there was some good news for investors yesterday. Capgemini release (release) figures which showed that this year revenues rise (rise) to €9,100 million, up from €8,700 million last year. In recent years Capgemini become (become) one of the leading players in the global IT services market, alongside IBM, EDS and Accenture. The company also/lead (also/lead) the way in the use of offshoring, often transferring work to countries such as India and Poland. This improve (improve) profitability as well as providing a wider range of options in the event of a sudden change in the market.

Dow Jones Stoxx Technology Index Figures 1st of each month

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Tasks

Speaking: listen and repeat

1 You are going to hear eight phrases. Listen and repeat.

Translate

2 Translate these short texts taken from the Internet into your own language. Remember not to translate word for word, but rather to make it sound natural.

The technology-heavy Nasdaq index has been falling for three weeks, and is now 34% lower than its March peak. Shares of companies announcing poor results have fallen by a third or a half after profits warnings.

Since completing a consolidation phase three years ago, ThyssenKrupp has been following a sustained and profitable course of growth. The company has raised its earnings forecast for the current fiscal year to over €3.2 billion before taxes.

Writing: personalized practice

3 Think about your life in the last year. Write answers to these questions using the past simple, present perfect simple and present perfect continuous.

1 How have you tried to keep fit and healthy?
   I've joined a health club. I went a few times after joining, but since then I haven't been at all. Also I've been trying to eat more healthy food. I don't really have much time for cooking, but I've learned a few new recipes.

2 How have you spent your money?

3 What have you done to keep up with new ideas in your professional field?

4 Have you been anywhere interesting?

5 What haven’t you done that you would like to have done? Why?

Rehearsal for the real world

4 Look again at the dialogue in exercise 6.4 and notice how the speakers use the past simple and the present perfect. Now write a similar dialogue between yourself and a friend or colleague who you meet after not being in contact for some time. Start like this:

Friend (give their name): Hi! I haven’t see you for ages!
Me: Hi, nice to see you again.

If you are working in class, read some dialogues aloud.