

Grammar units I

1. **Present Simple** and **Present Continuous**
2. **Past Simple** and **Present Perfect**
3. **Past Simple** and **Past Continuous**
4. **Present Perfect** and **Present Perfect Continuous**
5. **will** and **going to**

1. Present Simple and Present Continuous

Present Simple	Present Continuous
something which is permanently true	unrepeated action which occurs in a specific, non-permanent time frame (usually "NOW")
repeated actions or habits	
verbs of thinking or understanding	verbs of thinking or understanding when they become actions
seeing, hearing	watching, listening

Examples:

Present Simple	Present Continuous
I come from Italy	He is coming out of the building over there.
The sun rises in the east.	The sun is rising over the mountains.
I study English at the University of Palermo.	She is studying with her friends at Mary's house.
I see many opportunities for a woman like you.	I am watching television at the moment.
I love cold weather.	I am loving this film despite everything I heard about it.
I disagree with you.	He's is disagreeing with you in the politest way possible.
I hear your father is coming for a visit.	I'm listening to the game on the radio.
I live in Washington, though I'm staying in London at the moment.	
They usually work at the weekends, though they are not working at the moment.	
I am staying with my parents at the moment, though I have my own flat.	

2. Past Simple and Present Perfect

Past Simple	Present Perfect
finished past: action completed in the recent or distant past	unfinished past: actions begun in the past which continue or whose effects are felt in the present
no information is contained or implied about the present (I washed my hair – we don't know if hair is clean or dirty)	contains information about the past and the present
specific time frame in the past is stated or implied (I saw that movie. When?)	indefinite past (the time something happened is either not known or not important) – no time words can be present (what is more

	important than when) (I have seen that movie. Really? How was it?)
	personal experience; just/yet/already; for/since; superlatives; ordinals

Examples:

Present Perfect criteria	example
unfinished past: actions which continue in the present	I have studied English for three years. (info about the past and the present)
unfinished past: actions whose effects continue in the present	I have washed my hair. (hair is clean) (info about the past and the present)
indefinite past	Somebody has stolen my wallet.
personal experience (often with “ever” or “never”)	She has worked in a theatre. They have lived in a foreign country. She has never travelled out of Italy. Have you ever been to Rome? (avere al proprio attivo)
just, yet, already	He has just gone. She has already left. She hasn't phoned yet. (yet – negatives and questions)
for/since	I have studied English since 2001 / for 4 years. (studio l'inglese dal 2001 / da 4 anni.)
superlatives	It's the worst movie I have ever seen (che abbia mai ...)
ordinals	This is the fourth time Mary has called.

Past Simple or Pres Perfect?

Studio l'inglese da 8 anni.

Viviamo a Palermo dal 2002.

Sono due anni che Mary aspetta la promozione.

Sono stato a Parigi.

Pippo è andato a Parigi.

Cos'hai fatto ieri. Ho giocato a carte con alcuni miei amici.

Cosa c'è di nuovo? Abbiamo adottato un bambino.

La Juventus ha vinto lo scudetto.

La Juventus ha vinto lo scudetto nel 1998.

Perchè tutti festeggiano? Perchè il Palermo ha vinto lo scudetto.

Dove hai comprato quelle scarpe?

Hai comprato delle scarpe nuove per il matrimonio di Mary?

Hai portato qualcosa a Mary quando sei andato a trovarla?

Hai già volato?

Quando sei andato a Milano, hai preso il treno o l'aereo?

3. Past Simple and Past Continuous

Past Simple	Past Continuous
action completed in the recent or distant past	used to describe a past action at some point between its beginning and its end
no information implied about the present	always interrupted by the past simple, either explicitly (stated) or implicitly (context)
specific time frame in the past is stated or implied	often used in a past simple narrative to describe the background history or environment
in compound sentences with 2 verbs in the past simple and “when”, the verb that follows “when” occurs before the other	in compound sentences with 1 verb in the past simple and 1 verb in the past continuous and “when”, the verb in the past continuous occurs before the other

Examples:

Past Simple	Past Continuous
I didn't study for the exam.	I was studying for the exam when you called.
He loved Paris.	Paris was wonderful. The sun was shining, the street vendors were calling out to the tourist, and the cars were honking their horns loudly.
I worked there when I was sixteen.	What were you doing when I called? I was working.
I tried the asparagus.	I was trying to stop smoking and I didn't want to see all my friends who smoked.
They came into my office and sat down.	Who were you talking to? (I saw you talking to somebody).
I ate everything on my plate when my father promised me a ride on his motorcycle.	I was studying when my father came home.
We got into our car when the police arrived.	We were getting into our car when the police arrived.

4. Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous

Present Perfect	Present Perfect Continuous
can be used for actions and mental states	cannot be used for mental states (same as Present Simple and Present Continuous)
used when the action is complete and the final achievement is important	used when the activity itself is important; we are interested in how someone has been spending time, and the achievement is not as important
unfinished past: actions begun in the past which continue or whose effects are felt in the present	reinforces a) the effects of the action on the present, b) the repeated nature of the action, or c) the uninterrupted continuous nature of the action

contains information about the past and the present	more specifically, used to describe activities which were happening until this moment or a very short time ago
indefinite past (the time something happened is either not known or not important) – no time words can be present (what is more important than when) (I have seen that movie. Really? How was it?)	the time is more known – the recent past – although no time words may be present
personal experience; just/yet/already; for/since; superlatives; ordinals	most frequently used with “how long?”, as well as “for” and “since”; not really used with just/yet/already, superlatives, or ordinals
is often more formal than the present perfect continuous equivalent	is often more informal than the present perfect equivalent

Examples:

Present Perfect Continuous criteria	example
cannot be used for mental states (same as Present Simple and Present Continuous)	the Present Perfect allows: I have read that book. I have known her for years. the Present Perfect Continuous allows: I have been reading that book. NOT: I have been knowing her for years.
used when the activity itself is important; we are interested in how someone has been spending time, and the achievement is not important	I’ve been running. (Compare with “I’ve run six kilometres.”)
how long	How long have you been living in Sicily? How long has she been crying?
for since	I have been living in this neighbourhood for three years. He has been taking the bus since his car broke down.
used to describe activities which were happening until this moment or a very short time ago	I look tired because I have been studying all night. The children are all dirty. What have they been doing?
reinforces a) the effects of the action on the present, b) the repeated nature of the action, or c) the uninterrupted continuous nature of the action,	a) He has been stealing money from the company for ten years. b) I have been sending him letters for weeks without ever receiving an answer. c) I have been waiting for the bus for three hours.
is often more informal than the present perfect equivalent	I have been working here for almost a year but I still don’t know anybody’s name.

Pres Perfect or Perfect Continuous?

La conosco da quando era bambina. (PP)

Ho letto tutti i suoi libri. (PP)

Ultimamente leggo tutto quello che riesco a trovare su la clonazione (PPC)

Lui si vede con una signora più grande di lui. (PPC)

Sembra che hai appena visto un fantasma. (PP)

Hai cattivo alito. Hai fumato? (PPC)

Sono stato recentemente a New York. (PP)

Ha sempre odiato il pesce. (PP)

Ho parlato con il Rettore. (PP)

Che hai fatto (di bello)? (PPC)

Ho giocato con il mio cane. (PPC)

Ho comprato un cane. (PP)

5. will and going to

will	example
statement of future fact with a neutral tone	certain: The flight will take at least six hours. Juventus will win the championship. uncertain: I think it will rain tomorrow. I'm not sure he will be there.
sudden decision	Wait a minute – I'll open the door for you. I think I'll have a green salad please.
to show willingness to do or not to do something in the future (often as a promise or a threat)	I promise I'll be there. I'll never speak to him again.
first conditionals	If you call me tonight, I'll tell you all about it.
shall not used very often now; only for first person questions, to make suggestions and offers	Shall we go? Shall I open the door for you? Shall we go for a walk after dinner?

going to	example
statement of future fact with a neutral tone	certain: The flight is going to take at least six hours. Juventus is going to win the championship. uncertain: I think it's going to rain tomorrow. I'm not sure he is going to be there.
to talk about a future planned action	I'm going to see my parents on Sunday.
to talk about something in the future which we can see as a result of something happening now	Look at those clouds. It's going to rain. That drunken man is going to fall off the bike.
to make statements about the future in a neutral way (used interchangeably with "will")	Alan's going to be twenty this Friday. Are your parents going to have a holiday this year?
very common in conversations	"What are you going to do tonight?" (gonna)