Use the following words to fill the spaces below. Write one answer for each space.

present perfect simple / progressive / for / liked living here / has lived / has been living / since / result / began in the past / present perfect continuous / period of time / temporary situation

Present perfect simple and present perfect continuous can be used to talk about actions that 1 _______________ and still continue in the present. Examples:

Dave has driven that old car all his life.

The students have been studying for their English exams for three weeks.

One difference in meaning between the two forms is that present perfect simple expresses a permanent situation and present perfect continuous talks about a relatively 2 _______________. More examples:

The castle has stood on that hill for centuries.

Leaves have been falling from the trees recently.

Another difference between the two aspects of this tense is that 3 _______________ suggests that the action is still happening now and is probably going to continue into the future but 4 _______________ tells us that the action has now finished. Read these examples:

I've been studying law at the university this year. I'm finding it very hard.

I've studied five subjects since the beginning of this year. Now I think I'm going to study something else.

Mary 5 _______________ with her mother for a while until she finds another flat.

Mrs Jones 6 _______________ in many European countries since she was a girl. Now she is back in the USA.

(continues on page 2...)
(...page 2)

Both simple and continuous forms of the present perfect can use the prepositions "since" or "for" when they refer to time expressions. The preposition 7________________ is used to talk about periods of time and 8________________ refers to a certain moment in the past.

Examples:

I've been a member of the sports club for ten years.

They've been working on that building since last summer.

Mary has been sitting there waiting for you for ages.

The locals have spoken English here since the days of the British Empire.

We cannot always use present perfect continuous with all verbs. This is because some verbs are not usually used in the 9________________ form. Some of these verbs are: be, like, love, see, have (possessive), etc. Example:

"I've been liking living here" is not possible and we should say:

"I've 10________________ ."

The last use of present perfect continuous we'll discuss here is when we make a reference to the 11________________ caused by some action that has been happening over a 12________________.

Examples:

- What have you been doing? You're all wet!
  - Yes, I've been walking in the rain.

- Look at you! Your clothes are all torn. What have you been doing?
  - I've been trying to get the cat out of a tree.
Teacher’s notes.

The present perfect simple 2 and continuous (answers).

Time for activities: 45 mins. approx.
Level: lower-intermediate.

Answers

1. began in the past
2. temporary situation
3. present perfect continuous
4. present perfect simple
5. has been living
6. has lived
7. for
8. since
9. progressive
10. liked living here
11. result
12. period of time

The correct use of the present perfect simple and continuous is not always easy for foreign students to grasp. Neither is it always clear to students how we should use one or the other. What is not explained here (so as not to be confusing as an exercise) is that in many situations the simple and continuous forms can be interchangeable without appreciable difference in meaning. Whether we should say: The castle has stood on that hill for centuries or The castle has been standing on that hill for centuries is probably not important for spoken colloquial English situations.

Modern use of English is more and more tolerant of progressive uses of verbs that many older grammars state are not possible. “I’ve been wanting to talk to you.”; or the MacDonald’s advertisement: “I’m loving it!” mean that you might want to reduce the emphasis you place on teaching verb lists that presumably shouldn’t be used in the progressive. Are you liking what you’re hearing? (Mmmm?!) 

Oral activity:

This activity deals with the final use of the present perfect continuous in the above exercise, which should be clearer in students’ minds than the other uses mentioned. That is, when we see the result of some action recently completed by someone, we comment on what they have been doing.

You can print out onto A4 some appropriate photos of people from the Internet, where the question could be asked “what do you think he’s been doing?” “I think he’s been running for a bus because he looks tired.” Form small groups: three’s, four’s and hand out two or three photos to each group. Students comment on them in their groups. You go round and listen and note errors and then feedback to the class.

One possible error may be “She’s been having an accident.” Explain that completed momentary actions cannot be use in the progressive form. Most students can grasp this idea quite easily.

Enjoy the lesson!